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state might be described as an ordered anarchy. Likewise they lack law, if we understand by this term judgements delivered by an independent and impartial authority which has, also, power to enforce its decisions. There are signs that certain changes were taking place in this respect, and at the end of the chapter on the political system we describe the emergence of prophets, persons in whom dwell the spirits of Sky-gods, and we suggest that in them we may perceive the beginnings of political development. Leopard-skin chiefs and prophets are the only ritual specialists who, in our opinion, have any political importance.

After an examination of the political structure we describe the lineage system and discuss the relation between the two. Nuer lineages are agnatic, i.e. they consist of persons who trace their descent exclusively through males to a common ancestor. The clan is the largest group of lineages which is definable by reference to rules of exogamy, though agnatic relationship is recognized between several clans. A clan is segmented into lineages, which are diverging branches of descent from a common ancestor. We call the largest segments into which a clan is divided its 'maximal lineages', the segments of a maximal lineage its 'major lineages', the segments of a major lineage its 'minor lineages', and the segments of a minor lineage its 'minimal lineages'. The minimal lineage is the one to which a man usually refers when asked what is his lineage. A lineage is thus a group of agnates, dead or alive, between whom kinship can be traced genealogically, and a clan is an exogamous system of lineages. These lineage groups differ from political groups in that the relationship of their members to one another is based on descent and not on residence, for lineages are dispersed and do not compose exclusive local communities, and, also, in that lineage values often operate in a different range of situations from political values.

After discussing the lineage system in its relation to territorial segmentation we describe briefly the age-set system. The adult male population falls into stratified groups based on age, and we call these groups 'age-sets'. The members of each set become such by initiation and they remain in it till death. The sets do not form a cycle, but a progressive system, the junior set

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passing through positions of relative seniority till it becomes the senior set, after which its members die and the set becomes a memory, since its name does not recur. The only significant age-grades are those of boyhood and manhood, so that once a lad has been initiated into a set he remains in the same age-grade for the rest of his life. There are no grades of warriors and elders such as are found in other parts of East Africa. Though the sets are conscious of their social identity they have no corporate functions. The members of a set may act jointly in a small locality, but the whole group never co-operates exclusively in any activity. Nevertheless, the system is organized tribally and each tribe is stratified according to age independently of other tribes, though adjacent tribes may co-ordinate their age-sets.

The Nuer, like all other peoples, are also socially differentiated according to sex. This dichotomy has a very limited, and negative, significance for the structural relations which form the subject of this book. Its importance is domestic rather than political and little attention is paid to it. The Nuer cannot be said to be stratified into classes. Within a tribe there is slight differentiation of status between members of a dominant clan, Nuer of other clans, and Dinka who have been incorporated into the tribe, but, except perhaps on the periphery of Nuer expansion eastwards, this constitutes distinction of categories rather than of ranks.

Such, briefly, is the plan of this book and such are the meanings we attach to the words most frequently used to describe the groups discussed in it. We hope in the course of our inquiry to refine these definitions. The inquiry is directed to two ends: to describe the life of the Nuer, and to lay bare some of the principles of their social structure. We have endeavoured to give as concise an account of their life as possible, believing that a short book is of greater value to the student and administrator than a long one, and, omitting much material, we have recorded only what is significant for the limited subject of discussion.

III

When the Government of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan asked me to make a study of the Nuer I accepted after hesitation and with misgivings. I was anxious to complete my study of the

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CHAPTER I

INTEREST IN CATTLE

I

233 [241] A PEOPLE whose material culture is as simple as that of the Nuer are highly dependent on their environment. They are pre-eminently pastoral, though they grow more millet and maize than is commonly supposed. Some tribes cultivate more and some less, according to conditions of soil and surface water and their wealth in cattle, but all alike regard horticulture as toil forced on them by poverty of stock, for at heart they are herdsmen, and the only labour in which they delight is care of cattle. They not only depend on cattle for many of life's necessities but they have the herdsman's outlook on the world. Cattle are their dearest possession and they gladly risk their lives to defend their herds or to pillage those of their neighbours. Most of their social activities concern cattle and *cherchez la vache* is the best advice that can be given to those who desire to understand Nuer behaviour.[1]

The attitude of Nuer towards, and their relations with, neighbouring peoples are influenced by their love of cattle and their desire to acquire them. They have profound contempt for peoples with few or no cattle, like the Anuak, while their wars against Dinka tribes have been directed to seizure of cattle and [423] control of pastures. Each Nuer tribe and tribal section has its own pastures and water-supplies, and political fission is closely related to distribution of these natural resources, ownership of which is generally expressed in terms of clans and lineages. Disputes between tribal sections are very often about cattle, and cattle are the compensation for loss of life and limb that is so frequently their outcome. Leopard-skin chiefs and prophets are arbiters in questions in which cattle are the issue, or ritual agents in situations demanding sacrifice of ox or ram. Another 233 ritual specialist is the *wut ghok*, the Man of the Cattle. Likewise, • 561 in speaking of age-sets and age-grades we find ourselves des-

[1] Nuer interest in their cattle has been emphasized by early travellers in their country. *Vide* Marno, op. cit., p. 343; Werne, op. cit., p. 439; du Couret, op. cit., p. 82.

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233 cribing the relations of men to their cattle, for the change from
• 561 boyhood to manhood is most clearly marked by a corresponding change in those relations at initiation.

233 621 Small local groups pasture their cattle in common and jointly defend their homes and herds. Their solidarity is most evident in the dry season when they live in a circle of windscreens around a common kraal, but it can also be seen in their wet season isolation. A single family or household cannot protect and herd their cattle alone and the cohesion of territorial groups must be considered in the light of this fact.

233 581 The network of kinship ties which links members of local communities is brought about by the operation of exogamous rules, often stated in terms of cattle. The union of marriage is brought about by payment of cattle and every phase of the ritual is marked by their transference or slaughter. The legal status of the partners and of their children is defined by cattle-rights and obligations.

233 424 Cattle are owned by families. While the head of the household is alive he has full rights of disposal over the herd, though his wives have rights of use in the cows and his sons own some of the oxen. As each son, in order of seniority, reaches the age of marriage he marries with cows from the herd. The next son will have to wait till the herd has reached its earlier strength before he can marry in his turn. When the head of the household dies the herd still remains the centre of family life and Nuer strongly deprecate breaking it up, at any rate till all the sons have married, for it is a common herd in which all have equal rights. When the sons are married they and their wives and children generally live in adjacent homesteads. In the early part of the dry season one sees a joint family of this kind living in a circle of windscreens around a common kraal, and in the big camps formed later in the year one finds them occupying a distinct
233 583 section in the lines of windscreens. The bond of cattle between brothers is continued long after each has a home and children of his own, for when a daughter of any one of them is married the others receive a large portion of her bride-wealth. Her grandparents, maternal uncles, paternal and maternal aunts, and even more distant relatives, also receive a portion. Kinship is customarily defined by reference to these payments, being most

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805 took place. Moreover, since time is to Nuer an order of events of outstanding significance to a group, each group has its own points of reference and time is consequently relative to structural space, locally considered. This is obvious when we examine the names given to years by different tribes, or sometimes by adjacent tribes, for these are floods, pestilences, famines, wars, &c., experienced by the tribe. In course of time the names of years are forgotten and all events beyond the limits of this crude historical reckoning fade into the dim vista of long long ago. Historical time, in this sense of a sequence of outstanding events of significance to a tribe, goes back much farther than the historical time of smaller groups, but fifty years is probably its limit, and the farther back from the present day the sparser and vaguer become its points of reference.

805 •561 However, Nuer have another way of stating roughly when events took place; not in numbers of years, but by reference to the age-set system. Distance between events ceases to be reckoned in time concepts as we understand them and is reckoned in terms of structural distance, being the relation between groups of persons. It is therefore entirely relative to the social structure. Thus a Nuer may say that an event took place after the *Thut* age-set was born or in the initiation period of the *Boiloc* age-set, but no one can say how many years ago it happened. Time is here reckoned in sets. If a man of the *Dangunga* set tells one that an event occurred in the initiation period of the *Thut* set he is saying that it happened three sets before his set, or six sets ago. The age-set system is discussed in Chapter VI. Here it need only be said that we cannot accurately translate a reckoning in sets into a reckoning in years, but that we can roughly estimate a ten-year interval between the commencement of successive sets. There are six sets in existence, the names of the sets are not cyclic, and the order of extinct sets, all but the last, are soon forgotten, so that an age-set reckoning has seven units covering a period of rather under a century.

805 601 613 The structural system of time-reckoning is partly the selection of points of reference of significance to local groups which give these groups a common and distinctive history; partly the distance between specific sets in the age-set system; and partly

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cannot be understood until structural distance is known, since it is a reflection of it, and we must, therefore, ask the reader to forgive a certain obscurity at this point and to reserve criticism till we have had an opportunity of explaining more clearly what is meant by structural distance.

We have restricted our discussion to Nuer systems of time-reckoning and have not considered the way in which an individual perceives time. The subject bristles with difficulties. Thus an individual may reckon the passage of time by reference to the physical appearance and status of other individuals and to changes in his own life-history, but such a method of reckoning time has no wide collective validity. We confess, however, that our observations on the matter have been slight and that a fuller analysis is beyond our powers. We have merely indicated those aspects of the problem which are directly related to the description of modes of livelihood which has gone before and to the description of political institutions which follows.

We have remarked that the movement of structural time is, in a sense, an illusion, for the structure remains fairly constant and the perception of time is no more than the movement of persons, often as groups, through the structure. Thus age-sets succeed one another for ever, but there are never more than six in existence and the relative positions occupied by these six sets at any time are fixed structural points through which actual sets of persons pass in endless succession. Similarly, for reasons which we explain later, the Nuer system of lineages may be considered a fixed system, there being a constant number of steps between living persons and the founder of their clan and the lineages having a constant position relative to one another. However many generations succeed one another the depth and range of lineages does not increase unless there has been structural change. These statements are discussed more fully on pp. 198–200.

Beyond the limits of historical time we enter a plane of tradition in which a certain element of historical fact may be supposed to be incorporated in a complex of myth. Here the points of reference are the structural ones we have indicated. At one end this plane merges into history; at the other end into myth. Time perspective is here not a true impression of actual distances like that created by our dating technique, but a

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XI

554 562 593 Ritual status gives a man vague influence in his locality; but authority only in specific ritual situations. Sex and age are two, more general, conditioning attributes of local influence. Women and children have always a position inferior to that of men. Women occasionally gain a reputation as prophets and magicians but, as a rule, they play no leading part in public affairs. Among the Nuer, relations between the sexes, and between man and wife, are more equitable and give females more privilege than in any other tribe I have visited in the Southern Sudan. Nevertheless, they are subject to men: daughters to their fathers and wives to their husbands. Boys are under the command of their parents and elder brothers and only become full tribesmen, with the privileges and responsibilities of such, at initiation. The relations between the sexes and between children and adults belong rather to an account of domestic relations than to a study of political institutions.

561 623 When a lad has passed through initiation he becomes 'a man' and when he has married and begotten several children he becomes 'a true man', what we have called an elder. We have from time to time spoken of the part played by elders in homicides and other disputes. When a local community acts corporately and leadership and advice are required, these functions rest with the elders. They decide when seasonal moves are to be made and where camps are to be formed, negotiate marriages, advise on questions of exogamy, perform sacrifices, and so forth. Their opinions on such matters are readily accepted by the younger men, who take little part in the talk unless they are directly concerned in the issue. When the elders disagree there is much shouting and argument, for every one who wishes to speak does so and as often and loud as he pleases. The words of some elders count for more than the words of others and one easily observes that their opinions are usually agreed to.

561 These elders are members of central age-sets, at the present time the *Maker* and *Dangunga*, for members of the most senior sets, the *Thut* and *Boiloc*, take little part in public life. We discuss in Chapter VI the relations between age-sets. Here we

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remark only that there is no constituted authority within each set, all members being of equal status, and that, whilst members of junior sets respect those of senior sets, the authority of older men is personal, very indefinite, and based on analogy with domestic relations within the family. Behaviour between individuals is influenced by the distance between them in the age-set system, but age-sets are not a political institution in the sense of the system having an administrative, military, or judicial organization.

Age by itself does not give a man social position. He must have other qualifications as well. Those elders with most influence are the *gaat twot*, the children of bulls. Such a man is called a *tut*, bull, and in strict usage this is equivalent to *dil*, tribal aristocrat. As will be fully explained in Chapter V a *dil* is a member of the dominant clan in each tribe and, in virtue of his membership, has within that tribe a slightly superior social position. This clan is not a ruling class and the enhanced prestige of its members is very indefinite. The clan system has no hereditary leadership; a senior lineage does not rank higher than others; there is no 'father of the clan'; and there is no 'council of clan elders'. *Tut* is also used in a wider sense to refer to men of social position who do not belong to the dominant clan but to other lineages which have long been domiciled in the tribe. A *tut* in this rather wide sense of 'man of good standing', or 'social leader', is usually a scion of an important lineage, the head of his own family, and master of his homestead and herd. He is generally also the eldest surviving son of his father's family and, therefore, head also of the joint family, the master of the hamlet. If he is to gain a social reputation he must also possess sufficient cows to be able to entertain guests and to attract young kinsmen to reside in his byre. Round such a man's homestead are clustered the homesteads of his brothers and married sons and, often enough, the homesteads of his sisters' husbands and daughters' husbands. To be a social leader, whose opinion is readily agreed to, he must also be a man of character and ability.

The authority of a *gat twot*, or *tut wec*, 'bull of the camp', as he is often called, is never formalized. He has no defined status, powers, or sphere of leadership. Lineage, age, seniority in the

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CHAPTER VI

THE AGE-SET SYSTEM

I

ALL male Nuer are initiated from boyhood to manhood by a very severe operation (*gar*). Their brows are cut to the bone with a small knife, in six long cuts from ear to ear. The scars remain for life, and it is said that marks can be detected on the skulls of dead men. They are particularly clear in Plates XXVI(*b*), XXVII, and XXVIII. The ceremonial of initiation is more complex, and the age-set system has greater social importance among the Nuer than among other Sudan Nilotes.

We have described, and others have described, elsewhere the ritual of initiation. Though we have since collected further information on the details of the rites, we consider that to transcribe it here would be out of accord with the plan of this book. The barest facts are related. Boys are now usually initiated between the ages of 14 and 16; in the old days at a somewhat later age, perhaps from 16 to 18. Whether a boy is initiated in one year or in another year may depend on the milk and millet supply. A boy must obtain his father's consent to the operation, but it cannot well be refused, for the boy would then run away to the home of a kinsman and the father would be humiliated. He afterwards goes to a member of his father's age-set who performs a rite to give him the blessing of the set. A member of the clan likewise gives him its blessing, and his father and maternal uncle bless him. The boys make their own arrangements with the operator and each presents him with a fishing spear. The operator is any man who has learnt the art.

Several boys are initiated at the same time, for it is thought that were a boy to be initiated by himself he would be lonely and might die. Also, it is easier to cater for the boys and to give them the care and attention they require during convalescence if they are initiated in batches. Usually some four to a dozen boys pass through the rites together. Initiation can take place at any season, but it almost invariably takes place at the end of the rains, when there is plenty of food and the north wind blows and cicatrizes the wounds. Each village acts independently

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in arranging for its boys to be initiated. After the operation the boys live in partial seclusion and are subject to various taboos. This is a time of mild licence and they pass out of it by a special rite. On the day of the cutting, and on the day of the passing out of seclusion, sacrifices are made and there is festivity, which includes licentious horseplay and the singing of lewd songs. Only age-mates of the father of the initiate in whose homestead the feasting takes place attend it: others keep at a distance lest they see the nakedness of their kinswomen and mothers-in-law.

II

All boys initiated during a number of successive years belong to a single age-set (*ric*). There has, till recently, been a four-year interval between the end of one such set and the commencement of the next. These four years are known as the time 'when the knife is hung up', and at the end of that period it is said 'the knife is brought out' and boys may then be initiated again. A certain *wut ghok*, 'Man of the Cattle', is, in each tribe, responsible for opening and closing the initiation periods and thereby dividing the sets. He performs the appropriate rite in his district, and when the news goes round other districts begin or cease initiation. He derives prestige from his functions, but they are ritual and give him no political authority. Sometimes, in Western Nuerland, they are performed by a prophet, but it is possible that in these cases the prophet is also a Man of the Cattle. The age-sets are organized independently in each tribe, at any rate in the larger tribes, but it often happens that when a new set has been started in one tribe an adjacent tribe will follow its lead, so that the names and periods of sets in neighbouring tribes are frequently the same. Also, though in different parts of Nuerland the names of the sets are different and the open and closed periods do not coincide, it is easy for a man who moves from one part to another to perceive in which set he would have been initiated had he been brought up in that part of the country.

To-day there are no closed periods and boys are initiated every year. The Man of the Cattle announces every few years that he is about to cut the sets and performs a ceremony by which all

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youths initiated up to that year fall into one set and all youths initiated after that year fall into a junior set. The number of years during which a set runs before being cut is variable, and this has probably always been the case. We conclude on the evidence that ten years may be regarded as an average period between the commencement of one set and the commencement of the next. It was found that generally two sets, but occasionally one, intervened between the set of a man and that of his eldest son. In the case of younger sons two or three sets usually intervene. It may be accepted that on an average the generations of grandfather—father—son cover six sets.

At the time of my inquiry into the age-set system there were members of six sets alive, but there were only a few survivors of the senior set and the members of the next senior were very infirm. Sets with no living members are not recorded in the lists below. Their names are irrelevant to an understanding of the system and their order is so ill-remembered that the statements of two informants on the matter are seldom in entire agreement. It should be noted, however, that as far back as Nuer recitation carries us the names are not uniform for the whole of Nuerland and that they are not repeated. There is no cycle of names such as we find in many parts of East Africa. The Lou and the Eastern Jikany tend to have common names; also the tribes of western Nuerland; while the tribes of the Zeraf have some names in common with the Sobat river tribes and some with the tribes to the west of the Nile.

Lou tribe	Eastern Jikany	Lak tribe	Western Jikany and Leek tribes
Thut	*Thut*	*Thut*	*Lilnyang*
Boiloc	*Boiloc*	*Boiloc*	*Ruob*
Makr	*Makr*	*Ruob*	*Wangdel*
Dangunga	*Dangunga*	*Wangdel*	*Tânghwer*
Luac	*Carboc*	*Wooni*	*Rol*
Lithgac	*Lithgac*	*Kac*	*Jwong*
Rialmac	*Rialmac*	*Pilual*	*Bildeang*

Each age-set has two or three subdivisions. Each year in the initiation period may receive a separate name and constitute a division though probably two years often have the same name and the divisions are usually two-year periods. But though a set is thus stratified internally and the divisions are called by different

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881 names, all members of the set are known by the name of the first
561 division, and this common name persists while the others eventually fall into disuse. Thus to-day one seldom hears of *Maker indit* and *Ngwak*, but only of *Maker*, under which title both divisions are included. Likewise one hears small mention of *Gwong indit*, *Carboc*, and *Nyamnyam*, and reference is normally to *Dangunga* (*Gwong*), which term covers all three divisions. The senior division is called *indit*, the greater, and when the segmentary names are dropped the *indit* is dropped also, since its purpose is to distinguish the primary division from the later ones. Hence we have *Thut indit*, *Maker indit*, and *Boiloc indit*, the elder *Thut*, the elder *Maker*, and the elder *Boiloc*, but the *indit* ending in these names is eventually dropped and the complete sets become known as *Thut*, *Maker*, and *Boiloc*.

561 In recent years the matter has become somewhat complicated by the absence of well-defined closed and open initiation periods. Thus in my earlier visits to Lou and Eastern Gaajok I heard people speak of *Lieth indit*, *Lieth incar* (*Lieth intot*), *Caiyat* (*Pilual*), and *Rialmac* (*Rialdang*) as four divisions of the *Lithgac* age-set, but this was because there had been no declaration by the Man of the Cattle separating them into different age-sets. On a later expedition I found that the *Lieth indit*, the *Lieth incar*, and *Caiyat* had been declared to be a single age-set, and the *Rialmac* to start a new age-set, a second division of which, the *Kwekoryoamni*, has since been initiated. Similarly among the Western Jikany and Leek the *Bildeang* age-set has recently been declared separate from the *Juong*. At one time in Eastern Gaajok the *Lithgac* were cut off from the *Rialmac*, while in the adjacent country of the Eastern Gaajak they had not yet been separated and remained for the time being a single set. It may thus happen that, in modern times, a sub-division may for a time be regarded as the junior segment of one set and later become the senior segment of the next set. Below are given the sub-divisions of the age-sets in the Lou and Western Jikany tribes:

Lou		Western Jikany	
Thut	*Thut indit* *Muothjaang* *Lilcoa*	*Lilnyang*	*Lilnyang* *Lilcoa* *Lilcuath*
Boiloc	*Boiloc indit* *Golyanghakeat* *Laibwau*	*Ruob*	*Ruob* *Nomalith*
Maker	*Maker indit* *Ngwak*	*Wangdel*	*Wangdel* *Wathcar*

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	Lou		Western Jikany	
Gwong	*Gwong indit* *Carboc* *Nyanuyam*	*Tanghwar*	*Tanghwar* *Karam*
Luac	*Luac indit* *Karam* *Canthoari*	*Rol*	*Rol* *Pilual*
Lithgac	*Lieth indit (inbor)* *Lieth intot (incar)* *Caiyat (Pilual)*	*Jwong*	*Jwong* *Majaani*
Rialmac	*Rialmac (Rialdang) indit* *Kuekoryoam*	*Bildaang*	*Bildaang*

III

In seeking to understand how membership of an age-set determines a man's behaviour we have first to realize that there is no purposive education or moral training in the procedure of initiation. Also, many of the characteristic features of the age-set system in Kenya, where it is most highly developed, are absent in the Nuer variation. There are not three distinct age-grades of boys, warriors, and elders through which the sets pass, for a boy who is initiated into manhood remains in this grade for the rest of his life. Warriors are not prohibited from marrying and they neither enjoy privileges nor suffer restrictions different from those of other male adults. The sets have no administrative, juridical, or other specific political functions and the country is not handed over to their care. The sets have no definite military functions. Indeed, we are of the opinion that the Nuer age-set system ought not to be described as a military organization, though some writers give it this character. Youths who have recently been initiated are anxious for their first raid, and consider that they ought to earn for their set a reputation for valour, and it is likely that raids were generally conducted in the main by men of the most junior set. However, there is no grade of warriorhood through which the age-sets pass nor a grade of elderhood into which they enter. Were boys and old men to take part in warfare against other Nuer they would probably be killed, and it is understandable that raids are the occupation of the strongest and fleetest,

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561 701 though many middle-aged men accompany the expeditions and always have their share in inter-tribal fighting and local disputes.

The age-set system of a tribe is in no way its military organization. Men fight by villages and by tribal sections and not by sets. The war companies are local units and not age-set units, and within a company men of different sets fight side by side, though, especially in raids, most of the warriors would be members of the two most junior sets. Kinship and local ties determine a man's place in the ranks. Hence the age-sets are not regiments, though wars and raids are often spoken of as the actions of a certain set because they took place during the initiation period of this set and its members took the most prominent part in them, since skill in arms, love of adventure, and desire for booty are the privileges of youth.

561 885 It is in more general social relations, chiefly of a domestic and kinship order, and not in political relations that behaviour is specifically determined by the positions of persons in age-set structure. When a boy passes into the grade of manhood his [584] domestic duties and privileges are radically altered. His change of status is epitomized in the taboo on milking which comes into force on the day of his initiation and continues for the rest of his life, but it is expressed also in other domestic tasks, in habits of eating, and so forth. At initiation a youth receives from his father or uncle a spear and becomes a warrior. He is also given an ox, from which he takes an ox-name, and becomes a herdsman. From now on, till he is a husband and father, his chief interests are dancing and love-making. Then he becomes 'a true man': 'he has fought in war and not run away; he has duelled with his age-mates; he has cultivated his gardens; he has married a wife'.

There is a sudden and great change in status from boyhood to manhood, but the modes of behaviour which differentiate these two grades do not distinguish one set from another, for the privileges of manhood are enjoyed by members of all the sets equally. Nevertheless, the sets are stratified by seniority and there are well-defined relationships between them. Before summarizing these patterns of inter-set behaviour we touch on some general characteristics of the whole system.

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The age-set system is a further exemplification of the segmentary principle which we have seen to be so evident a quality of social structure. Tribes segment into sections and their sections further segment, so that any local group is a balanced relation between opposed segments. Clans segment into lineages and their lineages further segment, so that any lineage group is a balanced relation between opposed segments. Likewise the institution based on age is highly segmentary, being stratified into sets which are opposed groups, and these sets are further stratified into successive sections. We may therefore speak of structural distance in this new dimension. Just as the distance between political segments varies according to their positions in the political structure, and the distance between lineage segments varies according to their positions in the lineage structure, so the distance between age-set segments varies according to their positions in the age-set structure. The structural distance between any two sets is the social relation between those sets and the determinant of behaviour between their members.

The relativity of values which we noted in discussing the political and lineage systems may also be seen in the age-set system. We have noted that a set which is seen as an unsegmented whole by members of other sets is internally segmented, and that members of each of its segments see themselves as exclusive units in relation to the others, though these divisions close as the set becomes more senior and has a new position in relation to sets, since created, below it. Also, there is a tendency for members of two successive sets, adjacent segments of the structure, to fuse in relation to a third in feelings and in ceremonial actions. A *Rialmac* youth said: 'We and the *Lithgac* are about the same age and we can be free in speaking to them, but we must show respect to an older man, even if he is not of our fathers' age-set.' Although there are six sets with living members there are very few survivors of the two senior sets, and from the point of view of a young man they are merged with the one that follows them. Only four sets count, and, seen by individuals, they merge into two generation groups of equals and brothers, and seniors and fathers or juniors and sons. To a *Lithgac* son of a *Maker* father all members of the *Maker* age-set

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561 are his fathers, and the *Lithgac* and the *Luac* tend to see themselves as a single group in relation to the *Maker*, having a like attitude of respect towards them. But in relation to the *Dangunga* and to the *Lithgac*, the *Luac* identify themselves with the one or the other according to the direction of attention, and this is determined by the social situation. Any set tends to see the set senior to it as equals in relation to junior sets and the set junior to it as equals in relation to senior sets. It is possibly this contradiction which creates segmentation in any set. Thus, 561 at sacrificial feasts men eat according to their position in the 264 age-set structure, but which sets sit and eat together depends on the set of the owner of the feast and on the number of sets present at it. If a *Dangunga* kills an ox and there are *Maker* present, but not *Boiloc*, then *Dangunga* eat with *Maker* and *Luac* with *Lithgac* and the *Rialmac* by themselves; but if there are *Boiloc* present then the *Maker* eat with them and the *Dangunga* with the *Luac*, and the *Lithgac* with the *Rialmac*. The *Dangunga* would not eat with the *Boiloc* because they are the set of their fathers or fathers-in-law; and for the same reason the *Luac* must eat with the *Lithgac* if the *Dangunga* go with the *Maker*.

561 The age-set system differs from the territorial and lineage systems in one important respect. Whereas the people of a territorial segment remain, or most of them remain, in the same structural relation to other territorial segments for their whole lives, and whereas the members of a lineage have a fixed relationship to other lineages, an age-set group changes its position in relation to the whole system, passing through points of relative juniority and seniority. This mobility of age-set groups is peculiar to the system and is a necessary characteristic of it, for it is an institution based on the succession of generations. Probably, for oecological reasons, the actual political configuration remains very much the same from generation to generation. People pass through the political system without their structural position in it changing to any extent during their passage. It is the same with the lineage system. Nevertheless the mobility of groups through the age-set structure and their changing position in it should not be allowed to obscure the constancy of its structural form. There have pro-

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bably always been the same number of sets in existence at any time and these sets always have the same relative positions to each other in the system, regardless of actual groups of men composing them.

It is significant that among the Nuer, as among other East African peoples, the age-set system is the first institution to undergo rapid and great modification under European rule and that the other social systems do not appear to be affected by the changes in its constitution. This tends to confirm the opinion we have earlier expressed, that whilst the age-set system is combined with the territorial and lineage systems in the same social cadre and is consistent with them, the consistency is not an interdependence.

IV

Within the age-set system the position of every male Nuer is structurally defined in relation to every other male Nuer and his status to them is one of seniority, equality, or juniority. It is difficult to describe these statuses in terms of behaviour, because the attitudes they impose are often of a very general nature. The following points may, however, be noted. (1) There are certain ritual observances and avoidances, chiefly between members of the same set, but also between sets. The most important of these are the segregation of the sets at sacrificial feasts, to which we have referred, and the stringent prohibition on members of a set burying an age-mate or partaking of the meat of beasts sacrificed at his mortuary ceremony; but there are a number of other ritual injunctions. (2) A man may not marry, or have sexual relations with, the daughter of an age-mate, for she is his 'daughter' and he is her 'father'. Also, while a man may always have sexual relations with the daughter of one of his father's age-mates he ought not to marry her unless either his father, or her father, is dead, and then only after the parties to the marriage have exchanged beasts in atonement to the age-set of the fathers. (3) Members of the same age-set are on terms of entire equality. A man does not stand on ceremony with his age-mates, but jokes, plays, and eats with them at his ease. Age-mates associate in work, war, and in all the pursuits of leisure. They are expected to offer one

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561 571 another hospitality and to share their possessions. Fighting is considered an appropriate mode of behaviour between age-mates, but a man ought not to fight a man of a senior set. The comradeship between age-mates springs from a recognition of a mystical union between them, linking their fortunes, which derives from an almost physical bond, analogous to that of true kinship, for they have shed their blood together. (4) Members of a set are expected to show respect to members of senior sets, and their deference to them can be seen in discussions, in etiquette, in division of food, and so forth. Whenever there is a question about the propriety of speech or action it is judged by reference to the relative positions of the persons concerned in the age-set structure, if kinship status is not also involved. Since every man has a known age-relationship to every other man in Nuerland with whom he is likely to come into contact, their social attitude to him, and his social attitude to them, is determined in advance by the distances between them in age-set structure, unless kinship takes precedence. Although it is possible for a man to avenge a breach of these patterns of behaviour by a curse, if it is a very serious breach, the ordinary sanctions of conduct are a man's conscience and desire for approval.

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561 608 It will have been noted that the relations between the sets are defined in the idiom of family relationships. The members of a man's father's age-set are his 'fathers' and the members of his father's brothers' 'age-sets' are, in a less precise sense, also his 'fathers'. The sons of a man's set are his 'sons', and they may fall into several sets. The wives of members of a man's father's set are his 'mothers', and the wives of members of his sons' sets are his 'daughters'. All members of a man's own set are likewise 'brothers', though here the analogy is seldom expressed because the comradeship between age-mates is strongly affirmed in the idiom of the system, for they are all *ric*, age-mates, to one another. As, in any case, a man commonly addresses all persons much senior to himself as 'father' and 'mother', all persons much junior to himself as 'son' and 'daughter', and all persons of about the same age as himself as 'brother' and 'sister', the terminology of address between different sets is not a differentiating one and it cannot be said how

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far it is determined by specific age-set relationships. When speaking about sets senior to his own, but not that of his father or the set immediately senior to his own, a Nuer sometimes speaks about them collectively as though all their members were his fathers-in-law and their wives his mothers-in-law, for he is courting their daughters and is likely to marry one of them and so is circumspect in his dealings with their parents. Thus a *Lithgac* son of a *Maker* father regards members of the *Dangunga* set and their wives as potential fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law.

The age-set system thus influences persons through a kinship idiom and on the pattern of kinship. The sets never act corporately, but they function locally between individuals and, in ceremonial situations, between small aggregates of persons who live near to one another, for a man only has frequent contacts with those members of his set and of other sets who live in his district. No doubt relative positions in age-set structure to some extent determine behaviour between neighbours, and it can sometimes be observed that they determine it, but it is difficult to say to what extent, for men who live near one another are not only members of the same age-set or of different age-sets but are also kinsmen or affines. The age-set patterns of behaviour are, except in specific rites, of so general a nature that they cannot be isolated in a community where everyone is related in a number of different ways to everybody else. We have noted how persons who live together are always able to express their relations to one another in the language of kinship and how, when they are not actual kinsmen, they are recognized as equivalent to such by adoption or through some traditional, or mythological, connexion. The age-set stratification of all men, and by analogy all women, into groups whose inter-relations are on the pattern of family relationships is one of the ways by which community relations are expressed in kinship patterns and is comparable to the classificatory system of kinship nomenclature in its assimilation of social relations to a few elementary types. Age-relations are part of the general social ties of a kinship type which unite all persons living in a community. The members of a local group have group relations only with other groups of the same kind and it is these relations

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561 608 182 which we call political. They also have manifold contacts with one another—economic, ceremonial, food, play, and so forth—and political relations may be viewed as a specific organization of the texture of social ties, which control these contacts, in certain situations. It is this action of the age-set system, in establishing ties between members of local communities and in giving them a kinship value, that we chiefly stress in a political context rather than its indication of leadership, for outside small kinship and domestic groups the authority derived from seniority is negligible, and the sets lack leadership and administrative and judicial functions.

561 619 The age-set system has been briefly treated because of this action and also because, in the larger tribes at any rate, it is a tribal institution. It segments the male population of a tribe into stratified groups which stand in a definite relationship to one another and it cuts across territorial divisions, giving identity of status where there is political disparity and differentiating status where there is political identity. However, the political system and the age-set system do not seem to be interdependent. Both are consistent in themselves and to some extent overlap and influence one another, but it is easy to conceive of the political system existing without an age-set organization. There is evidence in East Africa that political development produces atrophy of the age-set organization. In conclusion we would again emphasize that adjacent tribes co-ordinate their sets and that the sets of any tribe are easily translated into the sets of another tribe. Initiation rites, more than anything save language, distinguish Nuer culture and give Nuer that sense of superiority which is so conspicuous a trait of their character. Only in the sense that age-sets are organized tribally and are common to all tribes can there be said to be a correspondence between the age-set system and the political system. There is no positive structural correspondence of the kind we have noted between the lineage system of dominant clans and tribal segmentation. It may be said, therefore, that whereas the political system and the lineage system of dominant clans are interdependent, the political system and the age-set systems are only a combination, in Nuer society. We may add that the common assumption that an age-set system merely by

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stratification integrates the members of a tribe has little to commend it.

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In the way we have written this book we have in some measure broken away from the tradition of lengthy monographs on primitive peoples. These weighty volumes generally record observations in too haphazard a fashion to be either pleasant or profitable reading. This deficiency is due to absence of a body of scientific theory in Social Anthropology, for facts can only be selected and arranged in the light of theory. It is aggravated by the error of confusing documentation with illustration. We have also tried to describe Nuer social organization on a more abstract plane of analysis than is usual, for usually abstract terms are mistaken for abstractions. Whether we have succeeded in doing so is for the reader to judge, but in case it be said that we have only described the facts in relation to a theory of them and as exemplifications of it and have subordinated description to analysis, we reply that this was our intention.

It is difficult to know how far one is justified in pressing an abstraction. Once one has a theoretical point of view it is fairly simple to decide what facts are significant, since they are significant or otherwise to the theory, but it may be doubted whether it is wise, in discussing the political institutions of a primitive people, to give only the barest reference to their domestic and kinship life. Can this be done successfully? That is precisely the question we have asked ourselves, and we have concluded that an answer can only be given to it by making the attempt.

1. We first gave an account of Nuer absorption in their cattle and showed how this value in their system of oecological relations necessitates a certain mode of distribution and transhumance. We then described the concepts of time and space that arise very largely from ways of livelihood and disposition of settlements. We then examined the territorial sections which, through the values attached to them, form a political system. We further noted that structural distance in the lineage systems

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claim part of it, for those who can claim part of a girl's bride-wealth are kin to her. Nuer state these rules in terms of cattle.

A man may not take his wife's sister or any near kinswoman of his wife as a second wife. A man may be on familiar terms with his wife's sister, but sexual relations with her are incestuous and it is only permissible for him to marry her if his wife has died without having borne children. When I argued that there was no kinship between a man and his wife's sister, Nuer said that this was not true. 'What about the child?' they asked. They regard a man and his wife's sister as related through the child of the wife—for a woman is only fully married when she has a child and comes to live with her husband's people as their 'kinswoman', as they say, since her child is their child. Her sister is therefore also a kind of kinswoman, seeing that she is also the mother of their child. Your wife's sister being your child's maternal aunt is your sister (as we say, sister-in-law). Nuer also define this relationship in terms of cattle. When your daughter is married her mother's sister receives a cow of her bridewealth, and Nuer hold that she cannot both receive this cow and be your wife at the same time, especially as the cow is in some degree regarded as part of the bridewealth still owing from your marriage to your wife. Also, when your wife's sister's daughter marries, your wife will receive a cow and Nuer feel that there is something wrong about this cow coming to her if her sister is also her co-wife. In certain circumstances a woman may claim cattle on her sister's marriage, and in this case the man who pays the cattle would also be the receiver of them were a man to marry his wife's sister—a situation the Nuer regard as impossible. Hence Nuer say that a man may not marry his wife's sister either 'on account of her (the wife's) children' or 'on account of the cattle', which are different ways of saying that he cannot marry his child's maternal aunt. There is a further reason which would prevent a man from marrying his wife's sister while his wife is living, for, as will be explained later, a man may not have sexual relations with two closely related women at the same time. It follows that two brothers ought not to marry sisters or close cousins: 'That would be bad because if your brother died you could not take his wife.'

A man may not marry the daughter of an age-mate, a member of his age-set, 'because she is his daughter'. The blood age-mates have shed together into the ground at their initiation gives them a

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582 kind of kinship. In certain circumstances an age-mate may claim
561 a cow, the *yang rica*, of the bridewealth of the daughter of one of his mates and a man may not be in the position of paying bride-
[606] wealth and being able to claim it. Nuer point out also that were a man to marry the daughter of an age-mate her parents would become his parents-in-law, and the respect he would have to show them would be incompatible with the familiarity with which he should treat age-mates and their wives and the liberties he may take with them. He could not, for instance, eat and drink in their home, an abstention in glaring contradiction to the behaviour expected of age-mates. The prohibition on marriage with the daughter of an age-mate imposes no inconvenience on Nuer, for there would always be a great difference in age between the man and woman, and this is, in any case, an obstacle to marriage seldom surmounted in Nuerland. Strictly speaking, a breach of this prohibition is not *rual* but Nuer say that it is 'like *rual*'. The prohibition is said to have been ordained by God, and it is believed that the guardian spirit of the age-set will avenge a breach of it.

It is said that in the past a man would not have been allowed to marry the daughters of his father's age-mates, for they are in a sense his sisters. It is still not permissible for such a marriage to take place if both the fathers are alive, since this would mean that the two age-mates would enter into a relationship characterized by mutual reserve and in conflict with the egalitarian status of age-mates towards one another. When one of the fathers is dead marriage can take place, but in this case a cow, or more likely a sheep or goat, must be given by each family to the other. This exchange is in payment to the *ric*, the age-set, of the fathers to avoid evil consequences, the animal being called 'the cow of compensation (or atonement) of the age-set'. There is no clash between patterns of behaviour when one of the fathers is dead because the attitudes towards a member of a father's age-set and towards a father-in-law are both of respect.

582 The rules I have recorded above can be generalized by saying, as Nuer do, that a man may not marry a woman who is *mar*, kin, to him. In the rules prohibiting marriage, kinship is traced farther in some directions than in others and is of different kinds: the clan kinship of the common spear; the *buth* kinship of collateral lineage and of adoption; uterine kinship; kinship through the genitor; the kinship of cognation; kinship which the birth of a

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601 my father', and he replied: 'He is my father's brother's son (*gatgwalen*)'. As I knew that the two men were either not at all or very distantly related, I asked how this could be. The lad then said that the man was 'a son of my father's distant brother (*gatgwalen ka noni*)'—a distant paternal cousin—and he added: 'He has lived so long among us that I call him "son of my father" ("*gatgwar*"). He has become my father's son. Also, his father and mine were of the same age-set.'

601 The example I have given introduces a complication, for, quite apart from the kinship system, every adult in Nuer society can be 561 addressed by one of the family relationship terms in virtue of his position in the age-set system. As I have described this system elsewhere it need here be considered only in so far as it is immediately relevant to the subject of kinship. Males are divided into the grades of boys and men, boys being initiated by successive sets into manhood by a severe ordeal. Without discussing the intricacies of the system it may be said that this arrangement of males by age means that from the point of view of any individual man all the other men of his society are formally classed as seniors, equals, and juniors, the division corresponding roughly to three generations —the older, his own, and the younger. To seniors he must show deference, with his equals he is on free and easy terms, and from his juniors he expects deference. Women are brought within the system as being daughters, sisters, and wives of members of sets. The age-set system thus supplements the kinship system in the organization of interpersonal relations in everyday social life. Again without going into details, men of an older generation within the system are 'fathers' and their sisters and wives are 'mothers', men of a man's own generation are 'brothers' ('sons of the father' or 'sons of the mother') and their sisters and wives are 'sisters', and men of a junior generation are his 'sons' and their sisters and wives are his 'daughters'. People address one another accordingly, except that men of the same generation usually salute one another by their ox-names. Thus everybody in Nuerland can be addressed as 'father', 'mother', 'brother', 'sister', 'son', or 'daughter' by reference to their position in the age-set system, and this usage may be regarded as a special instance, and one of the widest radius, of the classificatory use of relationship terms. All men of a man's father's age-set are his 'fathers', and all sons of a man's age-mates are his 'sons', and so forth. A man even speaks

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collectively of members of a set senior to his own, other than his father's set, as in-laws if they are senior enough for it to be likely that he will marry one of their daughters. In a sense everybody in the age-set system—that is to say, everybody in Nuerland in one way or another—is kin to everybody else, and the word *mar*, kinship, can be used in this connexion: *mar rica*, age-set kin. The use of relationship terms for persons within the system may in part—the common use of personal names may be another reason—account for the very informal, even haphazard, use of kinship terms among the Nuer, for the terminology of address of the age-sets may cut across that of kinship. For example, a man may be to another a classificatory paternal uncle or grandfather genealogically, but if he is of the same generation he is his 'brother' and would so address him and be addressed by him. Contradiction between the two systems is avoided by the assimilation of the values of both to those of the family by the use of the family relationship terms, for though one may not know whether a man is being addressed as 'father' in virtue of his place in the kinship system or in the age-set system, it could never happen that a term appropriate in the one would be inappropriate in the other. It is always correct to address very old persons as 'grandfather' and 'grandmother', persons of one's parents' generation as 'father' and 'mother', persons of one's own generation as 'brother' and 'sister', and persons of the generations of one's children and their children as 'son' and 'daughter'; and this usage may be quite independent of either kinship or age-sets, being merely a courtesy extension of the family terms to all men.

All members of a man's community, whether it be large or small, can thus be addressed by one of the family relationship terms. We do not, I think, understand this convention so well by regarding it, as it is often regarded, as an extension of family terms and sentiments from members of the family to kin as when we regard it as the verbal telescoping of kin into the circle of family reference so that, as Nuer say, the *gol* is not cut off from the *wec*, the hearth from the camp, the family from the community. A man belongs not only to his family but to a wider society.

IV

The classificatory use of terms of relationship is a special problem to be considered separately from the wide recognition of

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A man may not take his wife's sister or any near kinswoman of his wife as a second wife. A man may be on familiar terms with his wife's sister but sexual relations with her are incestuous and it is only permissible for him to marry her if his wife has died without having borne children.[1] It is said that were he to do so the children of the marriage would die. When I argued that there was no kinship between a man and his wife's sister Nuer said that this was not true. 'What about the child?' they asked. They regard a man and his wife's sister as related through the child of the wife—for a woman is only fully married when she has a child and comes to live with her husband's people as their 'kinswoman', as they say, since her child is their child. Her sister is therefore also a kind of kinswoman since she is also the mother of their child. Your wife's sister being your child's maternal aunt is your sister (as we say, sister-in-law). Nuer also define this relationship in terms of cattle. When your daughter is married her mother's sister receives a cow of her bridewealth, and Nuer hold that she cannot both receive this cow and be your wife at the same time, especially as the cow is regarded as part of the bridewealth still owing from your marriage to your wife. Also, when your wife's sister's daughter marries, your wife will receive a cow, and Nuer feel that there is something wrong about this cow coming to her if her sister is also her co-wife. In certain circumstances a woman may claim cattle on her sister's marriage, and in this case the man who pays the cattle would also be the receiver of them were a man to marry his wife's sister—a situation the Nuer regard as impossible. Hence Nuer say that a man may not marry his wife's sister either 'on account of her (the wife's) children' or 'on account of the cattle', which are different ways of saying that you cannot marry your child's maternal aunt. There is a further reason which would prevent a man from marrying his wife's sister while his wife is living, for, as will be explained later, a man may not have sexual relations with two closely related women at the same time. It follows that two brothers ought not to marry sisters or close cousins: 'That would be bad because if your brother died you could not take his wife.'

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A man may not marry the daughter of an age-mate, a member

[1] A single case of marriage to two sisters at the same time was recorded. A well-known magician on the Sobat river defied the prohibition. When, however, one of his daughters fell sick with syphilis, or yaws, he gave up the second sister.

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of his age-set, 'because she is his daughter'. The blood age-mates have shed together into the ground at their initiation gives them a kind of kinship. In certain circumstances an age-mate may claim a cow, the *yang rica*, of the bridewealth of the daughter of one of his mates, and a man may not be in the position of paying bridewealth and being able to claim it. Nuer point out also that were a man to marry the daughter of an age-mate her parents would become his parents-in-law and the respect he would have to show them would be incompatible with the familiarity with which he should treat age-mates and their wives and the liberties he may take with them. He could not, for instance, eat and drink in their home, an abstention in glaring contradiction to the behaviour expected of age-mates. The prohibition on marriage with the daughter of an age-mate imposes no inconvenience on Nuer, for there would always be a great difference in age between the man and woman, and this is, in any case, an obstacle to marriage rarely surmounted in Nuerland. Strictly speaking, a breach of this prohibition is not *rual* but Nuer say that it is 'like *rual*'. The prohibition is said to have been ordained by God and it is believed that the guardian spirit of the age-set (*kwoth ricdien*) will avenge a breach of it.

It is said that in the past a man would not have been allowed to marry the daughters of his father's age-mates, for they are his sisters. It is still not permissible for such a marriage to take place if both the fathers are alive, since this would mean that the two age-mates would enter into a relationship characterized by mutual reserve and in conflict with the egalitarian status of age-mates towards one another. Thus Nuer may be heard to say of such a set as the Wangdel, 'The Karamni marry their daughters, we the Piluali do not', meaning that the Karamni, who belong to the set next junior to the Wangdel, would not be their sons, whereas the Piluali, who belong to the next set but one, would be mostly their sons. When one of the fathers is dead marriage can take place but in this case a cow, or more likely a sheep or goat, must be given by each family to the other. This ritual exchange is in payment to the *ric*, the age-set, of the fathers to avoid evil consequences, the animal being called 'the cow of compensation (or atonement) of the age-set'. There is no clash between patterns of behaviour when one of the fathers is dead, because the attitudes towards a member of a father's age-set and towards a father-in-law are both of respect.

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835 avoided easily and without expense by cutting in twain, in the place of an animal sacrifice, a *kwol*, a wild, yellow, tomato-like fruit found in abundance near habitations. It is only if the paternal uncle is the father's uterine brother or if his family forms a common household with that of the father that relations with his wife are regarded in a more serious light. They may bring on the offenders serious misfortunes.

The uterine brother is a brother *kwi man*, on the mother's side, and relations with his wife reflect the disgust Nuer feel at any association of sex with the mother. They regard relations with wives of relatives of the mother's side with distaste 'because of the mother'. The uterine paternal uncle partakes in a lesser degree of the same maternal associations because he is a son of the father's mother. But the paternal half-uncles, the paternal half-brothers, and the paternal cousins are 'bulls', and *Tut thilke rual*, 'There is no incest among bulls.' If they live in different villages from that of the adulterer some compensation in cattle might be exacted, but if they live in the same village it will not be asked for: 'There would be no compensation, for they are of the same community (*cieng*).' Nuer say, however, that adultery with the wife of a paternal half-uncle is wrong 'because of the father', which means because the half-uncle should be treated on the pattern of the father. To have relations with his wife is not incestuous, but shows lack of respect. Relations with the wives of paternal half-brothers and paternal [834] cousins are not subject to the same restraint. It is not *rual* to • [561] have relations with the wife of an age-mate, but it is regarded as a grave breach of confidence, for a man will trust his wife to the honour of an age-mate, and it is believed that the guardian-spirit of the age-set will punish the offender.

835 It is forbidden on incestuous grounds to have relations with 587 the wives of kinsmen, other than those mentioned, but only during their lifetime, when they are themselves cohabiting with their wives. It is permissible, indeed to some extent obligatory, to take the place of the husbands in leviratic marriage. It is usual for a widow to cohabit with her dead husband's brother, for preference with his uterine brother. Sometimes the son takes her and occasionally the sister's son. If a man thus cohabits with his father's, uterine brother's, or maternal uncle's widow, he first breaks off the physical relationship between the widow and her late spouse by sacrificing a sheep. Nuer says: 'He

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THE NUER: AGE-SETS.

By E. E. Evans-Pritchard.

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X[1]. Introductory note. Rôle of departmental experts in organisation of age-sets. The operation. Period of licence. Nomenclature and organisation of age-sets.

XI. Age-sets not regiments. Change in social status. Age-sets and kinship ties. Regulation of marriage. Influence of age-sets on leadership.

IN my earlier paper on the Nuer tribe and clan their age-set system was mentioned shortly as providing social stratification on a basis of age, and was hence one of the institutions relating to political authority and leadership. In the present paper age-sets are dealt with in more detail and their ritual of initiation, their structure and machinery, their ideology, and their social functions are described. A great part of the information given in this paper was collected from the lips of informants since I had no opportunity of witnessing initiation ceremonies, but on the other hand close contact with Nuer in their cattle camps enabled me to observe the less spectacular but perhaps more important relations of the age-set system in its daily commonplace action in social life. We are fortunate in possessing other accounts of Nuer age-sets, though I have no doubt that our combined accounts give a very incomplete picture of the institution.[2] The subject is not only of interest for those who come into contact with the Nuer but is of great importance for a general study of the age-set system in East Africa which still awaits comparative treatment.

A few words may be said here about the difference between "Age-grade" and "Age-set," a distinction in which I follow Prof. Radcliffe-Brown. An age-set is "a recognised and sometimes organised group consisting of persons (often male persons only) who are of the same age. .....In Africa, at any rate in East and South Africa, an age-set is normally formed of all those males who are initiated at one time..... Once a person enters a given age-set, whether at birth or by initiation, he remains a member for the remainder of his life." An age-grade is a term which "should be kept for recognised divisions of the life of an

[1] Numbered in continuation of my previous paper on "The Nuer: Tribe and Clan," *Sudan Notes and Records*. Vols. XVI–XVIII. The diagrams in this paper are also numbered in continuation of the diagrams in my previous paper.

[2] See bibliography in my earlier paper.

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individual as he passes from infancy to old-age. Thus each person passes successively into one grade after another, and, if he live long enough, through the whole series—infant, boy, youth, young married man, elder, or whatever it may be..... In East Africa, where the age-organisation is highly elaborated, each age-set normally passes from one grade to another as a whole."[1]

In this paper we are dealing mainly with the change of status brought about by initiation from Boyhood to Manhood. Initiation involves, however, not only a change from one social grade to another but also entrance into a set in which the individual remains for the rest of his life. The members of each set have a common name, like status, and like patterns of behaviour towards one another and toward: members of senior and junior age-sets.

Among the Nilotes of the Sudan the age-set system appears to be most important among the Nuer on account of both the severity of its initiation and the social significance of the privileges associated with it. Among the Shilluk age-sets do not seem to occupy an important place in social organisation and the institution has an appearance of decay. The Seligmans record that at the time of their visit "it was of little importance and was probably dying out."[2] Among the Dinka it gives the impression of being of more importance than among the Shilluk and of less importance than among the Nuer, and the same may be said of the age-sets of the Nilo-Hamitic Bari discovered by Mr. Whitehead.[3]

The chief officer in respect to initiation into age-sets is the *wut ak* and this is in keeping with the fact that initiation largely concerns a boy's contact with the cattle. Before initiation he milks the cows and looks after the small calves and sheep and goats. After initiation he is strictly prohibited from milking the cows and he acts as herdsman to the adult cattle. During the period of initiation it is taboo for him to have any contact with the cattle and his first action on its conclusion is to re-establish this contact. After initiation also he receives a bullock or two from his father, and becomes legitimate owner of a bullock name and is permitted to dance and sing behind the bullocks.

[1] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. *Man.* 13, 1909.

[2] C. G. and B. Z. Seligman. "The Pagan Tribes of the Southern Sudan," pp. 72-3.

[3] *Id.* pp. 170-2 and 263-4. Cf. the lengthy account of age-sets among the Nilotic Lango of Uganda by J. H. Driberg.

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883 hunting, the camp does not seem to have any expressed purpose or activity. Certainly I never heard that there was any organised educational training. The young men return to their homesteads in time to eat the *mak*, a mash made by beating out the ear and grinding corn not yet fully ripe and still soft.

881 What I have recorded above is all I know about the ceremonies of cutting the tribal marks and the periods of seclusion and licence associated ● 561 with the *gar*. So far nothing has been said about the organisation of the *ric*, the age-sets, and I will now turn to this point. According to Jackson " the initiation ceremony should in theory be held about once every 15 years, and this may have been the rule when the tribe was less numerous than it is at the present moment. Nowadays the boys are initiated when there are sufficient of them to make it worth while."[1] It seems to me that this estimate of 15 years is too large since it would mean that many youths would be from 20 to 25 years old at their initiation, which would be contrary to the purpose of the rite. I was told by a good authority in Lou country (Tutrial) that there is always a four years' interval between the closing of one age-set and the commencement of the next one. This information accords with Father Crazzolara's statement that " as a rule the *Gar* takes place once every four years " but he adds that the cattle chief may deviate from this rule for public or even private reasons[2]. He reckons that we may allow about seven years for each *ric* when reckoning a man's age : thus members of the *Pilual* age-set are from 15 to 22 years of age, members of the *Reol* age-set from 22 to 29, members of the *Tawkwar* age-set from 29 to 36, and so on. If we can say with fair certainty that there is a four years' interval between each period of initiation we must therefore conclude on this reckoning that each period of initiation lasts about three years. But I am not convinced that we can make so sure a deduction, nor that there is complete regularity in the periods of time during which initiation takes place. Father Crazzolara himself says that the period of initiation may last only a year or up to four years according to the district.[3] On the other hand, at any rate in Lou country, this period may last for several years and youths have been initiated into the *Nikgac* age-set continuously for at least eight years. Judging from this

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 149.

[2] " Im allgemeinen wird das *Gar* alle vier Jahre vorgenommen. Der Landeshauptmann kann aus besonderen Gründen hierin eine Änderung eintreten lassen. So wurde 1928-9 von einem Landeshauptmann bei der Eröffnung der *Garzeit* entgegnet, es möge jeder bei dem Entscheidung, ob sein Sohn dieumal gegart werden soll oder das nächste Mal, wissen und erwägen, dass das nächste *Gar* erst stattfinden wurde, wenn sein (des Sprechers) noch sehr junger Sohn auch gegart werden könnte, womit erst nach 3 oder 4 Jahren." *Op. cit.*, pp. 28-9.

[3] *Op. cit.* p. 89. " Die *Gargemeinde* kann ein Jahr oder auch bis vier dauern, je nach dem Wunsch eines Häuptlings."

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fact and reckoning from the appearance of age which members of the various age-sets present, I think that it would be wiser to allow a ten years' interval between each age-set and at the same time remember that this is likely to be fictitious, since the periods during which boys are being initiated are not regular, though the time interval between the cessation of one period of initiation and the commencement of the next are probably the same. Thus I should reckon that the youngest age-set, the *Lilkgar*, in Lou country commenced about 1923 and that the oldest age-set, members of which are still alive (the *Thuol*), commenced about 1873. This would make these few survivors about 70–75 years of age to-day. Miss Huffman gives a lower estimate which makes these members of the *Thuol* age-set between 60 and 70 years of age, an estimate nearer to that of Father Crazzolara than to mine.[1] However, any calculation must be only roughly approximate since it is not possible to count in the exact manner which the regular cycles of other peoples allow. I am not certain that among the Jekany tribes there are any breaks in initiation, and I am under the impression that initiation goes on every year and that the sets are divided by a declaration of the *wut ok* that all the youths initiated up to a certain time belong to the one set, and all initiated after the time to another set. Thus I was told that in Gaajak country the *Lilkgar* were cut off from the *Rialwac*, but that since the *wut ok* had not come in person to cut them into two sets, in Gaajak country they still remained members of the same set.

The following are the complete lists of age-sets given by various authorities (the oldest age-sets are given first) :—

Jekany (Jackson) [2]	Jekany (Huffman)	Gaajok (Jackson)
Tut	*Yilkiik*	*Riagk*
Bai Leiak	*Lajok*	*Jaak*
Bundini	*Coutuow*	*Thai Bor*
Wang Dell	*Hompiny*	*Gor Leiak*
Kadik	*Thiol* (60–70)	*Yuaaiak*
Wuaaai	*Bailer* (55–60)	*Yil Biik*
Kaaaa	*Maker* (50–)	*Ngaaa Piny*
Shaal Nyadiyat	*Dongembe* (40–)	*Shaai Shaaw*
Pil Nuaiak	*Carbor* (27–35)	*Lajak*[3]
	Lilkgaar indiri (19–27)	*Tut*
	Lilkgaar tuiat (10–15)	*Bai Leiak*
	Cai Yaaai (1915)	*Maker*
	Liaai (1907)	*Dang Gaaga*
		Shar Bai
		Lil Gaiak (1915)

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 33.
[2] Jackson says that this list is incomplete and that the Lou have the same age-sets.
[3] Said to be only one man still living at the time when Jackson wrote.

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Jekany (E-P)	Lou (E-P)	Gaawar, Lak, Thiang (Jackson)
Ngumpiny	*Golec*	*B (m) oin*
Yilbith	*Cathor*	*Tuunyagaing*
Cuatuur	*Tobroah*	*Shad Bur*
Yoac	*Yoac*	*Gunaish*
Gorloc	*Lilaguony*	*Gall Loiich*
Laijah (all dead)	*Ngumpiny*	*Tshat Tchuuruah*
That	*Yilbith*	*Keir Nyung*
Boiloc	*Thalpi* (all dead)[1]	*Boi Loiich*
Maher	*That*	*Mahair*
Dangunga	*Boiloc*	*Lajah*
Carboc	*Maher*	*Lao*
Lithgoc	*Dangunga*	*Dang Gung*
Rialmac[2]	*Luac*	*Tchab(u)oi (Luaish)*
	Lithgoc	*Lid Gaish*
		Karam (1917)

Bull (Jackson).	Karlual (E-P)	Jagei (E-P) (incomplete)
Riur	*Thurpi*	*Wan*
Juuk	*Lilnyaang*	*That*
Gunaish	*Ruoh*	*Boiloc*
Keir nyung	*Wandual*	*Ruoh*
Barunish	*Rol*	*Wandual*
Lid Keli	*Pilual*	*Liar*
Kaar		*Karam*
Kat kuli		*Pilual*
Thurpi		
Lid Kang		
Lid Tchuuk[3]		
Lid Nyung		
Roop		
Wang Dell		
Nyung		
Qui (1919)		

Each age-set has two or three sub-divisions. Each year in the initiation period may receive a separate name though probably two years often have the same name. But though a set is thus stratified internally by a different nomenclature for each year or for every two years, all members of the set have a common name which is the name of the first division of the set to be initiated. This common name persists while the subsidiary names fall eventually into disuse. The set are a unity in relation to other sets while the conventional divisions between different years in the set

[1] See reference to *Rialmac* and *Lithgoc* on p. 247.

[2] An alternative list going upwards from *That* into senior age-sets runs: *Laijah, Thalpi, Cuatuur, Ngumpiny, Yoac, Cathor, Tawang, Lilbil, Juuk, Kawyaang, Nuan.*

[3] This set and all above it are dead.

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itself tend to disappear as the years go on. Thus in Lou country to-day one hears of *Lieth indit* and *Lieth inar* and *Pilual* (*Caiyat*) and *Rialmar* (*Rial dang*) as four sections of the present initiation period, but all of them are *Lithqar* and the three subsidiary names will fall into disuse and all will one day be called simply *Lithqar*. In the same way one does not hear to-day of *Maker indit* and *Ngwak* but only of *Maker* under which name both divisions are included. In the same manner one hears little to-day of *Gaang indit*, *Carbac*, and *Nyamnyam* but only of *Dangwanga* or *Gaang* which covers all three sub-divisions. The senior division is called *indit*, the greater, and when the subsidiary names are dropped the *indit* is dropped also since its purpose is to distinguish the upper divisions from the other ones. Hence we have *Thut indit* and *Maker indit* and *Bailoc indit*, the elder *Thut*, the elder *Maker*, and the elder *Bailoc*, but the *indit* ending in these names is eventually dropped and the complete sets become known as *Thut*, *Maker*, and *Bailoc*.

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The following are the subdivisions in the age-sets in Lou country as far as I was able to ascertain them :—

	Thut indit
	Mankjaang
Thut	*Lilum*
	Bailoc indit
	Gelyanghkhat
Bailoc	*Laibwan*
	Maker indit
Maker	*Ngwak*
	Gaang indit
	Carbac
Gaang	*Nyamnyam*
	Lour indit
	Karam
Lour	*Carnthour*
	Lieth indit (inher)
	Lieth inar
	Caiyat (Pilual)
Lithqar	*Rialmar (Rialdang)*

Sometimes a section or sub-section has two different names, *e.g.*, *Gaang* and *Dangwanga*, *Lieth indit* and *Lieth inher*, *Caiyat* and *Pilual*, but I do not think that this has any significance, being due simply to the invention of different names in different parts of the country as far as the great sub-divisions are concerned and being a variation when it occurs in the permanent name of the age-set.

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561 I believe that these sub-divisions occur all over Nuerland and that they become merged into the single name of the whole set as in Lou country. This fact probably accounts for a number of differences in the lists given above since I think that sometimes sub-divisions have been given as though they were different age-sets whereas in reality they are only two divisions of the same age-set. These divisions occur on the west bank of the Nile no less than on the east bank, and I record beneath a list which I collected from a Lak youth, and though it is almost certainly inaccurate in some particulars it gives clearly enough the method of sub-division :—

Thorpi	
	Liloyaang
Liloyaang	*Lilwa*
	Ruak
Ruak	*Lilwath*
	Wandaang
Wandaang	*Tangkaar*
Rol	*Pilual*
	Jaang
Pilual	*Jawath*
	Gaiabiu

An informant in Lou country (Wau) told me that the reason for having different divisions in the same age-set is to prevent a boy and his brother from having an identical status in the age-set. It sometimes happens that two brothers are initiated on the same day but in this case they are distinguished by the younger brother receiving seven cuts across his forehead while the elder brother receives the usual six. Much more frequently it happens that a boy and his brother are initiated into the same age-set though during different years, perhaps two or three years apart from one another. In this case they are distinguished by belonging to different sub-divisions of the age-set.

The names of the age-sets seem quite fortuitous. They are not stereotyped and recurrent as is often the case in East Africa where the age-sets are organised into an age-cycle. Among the Nuer each age-set acquires a name by association with some incident of the period of initiation which may have a specific connection with the members of the set or may be of a general nature. Jackson gives a number of interpretations of these names in his papers on the Nuer, *e.g.*, *Riar* (Bul country) were called after the heads of dura (*riar*) because the seed dura

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which was hung up in the huts in preparation for the rains was eaten prematurely; *Qui* (*Kue*) (Bul country) were called after a *thak ma kwe*, a fish-eagle bullock, black with a white face, which was sacrificed by the cattle-expert before the initiation period was opened. Father Crazzolara derives the name *Pilual*, red water, from the fact that red-coloured beer was served up in the age-set. He says that this *ric* is also called *Codwyalla* (Lak country) because an ox of this name was slaughtered, and also *Laik Warakwei* because of the recent introduction of cotton (*laik*) into the country by the late Capt. Fergusson, whom the Nuer called *Warakwei*. He says that *Liath Gee* are so-called because a couple of recently initiated boys broke into a hut and stole butter (*liath*) from it. They are also called *Rool* because at the conclusion of the festivities to celebrate their initiation an ox of this name was slaughtered. *Tankuw* are so-called because an ox *ma kwei* was slaughtered.

To these derivations I may add those given to me for the names of the Lou age-sets: *Lith isker* was so-called because the bullock that was sacrificed at the commencement of this *ric* by Gai Jaang, the Gaajak cattle-expert, was of this colour; *Luac* was so-called because it was a period of great hunger and the boys and newly initiated men were forced to satisfy their hunger with gum from acacias (*luac*); *Dangunga* (an individual member of this set being called *gwong*) was so-called because the boys in hunger were forced to fall back on guinea fowl (*gwong*), which they caught in nooses or struck with clubs thrown at them in the branches of trees to which dogs had driven them; *Maker* was so called because a bullock of this colour was sacrificed, or according to another version it was a Nuer effort to pronounce the arabic word *eskeri*, as these soldiers were then prominent and used to go about with the government chiefs (the full name according to this second version is *kiaskeri*); *Boiloc* was so-called because this was a year of cattle plague, and of those which died only the beasts which had a white heart (*boi*, *loc*) were eaten, the others being considered unfit for consumption; I do not know why the *Thut* age-set is so-called. I believe that the name of the set, which is always taken from the name given to the initiates of the first year, is given by the cattle-expert, but the names of the sub-divisions of other years are not given formally by anyone but are a chance popular creation.

There are different ways of referring to the *ric*. Generally one speaks of its members and one then uses the plural of the words given

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561 in the lists above. Thus one speaks of the *Piluali*, the *Karamni*, the *Ruobni*, the *Lithgaoni*, the *Thutni*, the *Rialmacni*, the *Makeri*, the *Nyamnyamni*, etc.

XI.

881 867 In seeking to understand the social action of the Nuer age-set system I think that we should first of all abandon the idea that there is any purposive education in initiation. Neither in connection with the cutting nor during any subsequent stage does the initiation of the boys include educational or moral training. It is true that a father may admonish his son at this time to be brave in war, to avoid the wives of other men, to be generous, and never to display greed, but such advice is of the general kind which may be given unsystematically at any time during boyhood. I could find no evidence that there is any kind of teaching of the boys during initiation, either of technique or of traditions. Nor was I told upon repeated enquiry that there was any moral instruction.

561 114 I cannot agree with Stigand's description of the Nuer age-sets in this respect and I think that he was largely reading into them the purpose and methods of the Masai system with which he was familiar. He wrote of initiated youths: "When finished they are trained by the old class; the training includes mock battles, fighting with sticks and pelting one another with balls of dried clay—to learn quickness in avoiding spear thrusts. After two years the training is complete, the old class then retire and gradually get married whilst the new class having finished their training go back to live in their villages." He says: "The newly-made warrior may not marry until relieved by the next class."[1] I found nothing which could confirm this account of two-years' training and the prohibition of marriage on the older class during the training of the set which was to replace it, and there is nothing in Jackson's account and little in the recent paper by Father Cranolara which bears it out.

561 701 I think, moreover, that the Nuer age-sets are only incidentally a military system at all, though Stigand and, less dogmatically, Jackson give them this character. It is perfectly true that in warfare the junior age-sets play the chief part, but this is simply due to the fact that they are old enough, and yet not too old, to fight. Boys do not take part in

[1] *Op. cit.* p. 107.

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warfare because they would certainly be killed if they did and the same applies to old men. Nevertheless a good number of the older men who are more active than fellow-members of their age-set will accompany expeditions. Moreover war is organised by tribal sections based on locality and communal sentiment and not by the age-set system. The whole of a district or a tribe is summoned to take part in a feud or in a raid on the Dinka, and anyone will accompany the expedition who wishes to do so. They do not call up certain age-sets and leave others at home. During the actual fighting, while it is natural that people of roughly the same age will fight side by side, there is nothing compulsive about this arrangement and men of all ages fight together as a section. Thus when two sections unite for warfare we shall find the men of each section fighting with their section and not with their age-set. In the same way a man is not expected to fight only warriors of his own age-set but will engage with whomsoever he finds opposite to him. Hence we may say that the Nuer age-sets are not regiments, and indeed have no specific military functions, but that since age and the ability to bear arms are necessarily related it happens that active warriors are recruited from certain age-sets. On the other hand the social and economic relations of the age-set system are outstanding and it is in them rather than in its ritual that we must look for its significance.

In its economic relations Nuer social life comprises three groups of persons—the women, the men, and the boys. The productive labour of women differs in many respects from that of men but the most prominent distinction between their activities is in milking the cattle. A man may not milk the cows. This is not simply a customary division of labour, as in cooking for example, but is a ritual prohibition or taboo. Were a man to milk a cow all sorts of misfortunes would follow, in particular the death of the cow. The restriction of milking to women has far-reaching effects on their position in Nuer society. But in this respect boys are classed with the women, for they are allowed to milk the cows until they have been initiated into manhood. Consequently initiation means that a boy ceases to milk; he severs his association with women's work; he becomes a man in the sense that he joins the men's group as distinct from the women's group in social life.

If cessation from milking is the most outstanding change in a boy's occupations after initiation it is by no means the only one, for his whole

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mode of life changes when he becomes a man, that is to say when he is made a man by social machinery, for he does not become a man in virtue of biological condition alone. An initiated boy ceases also to assist women and girls in the more menial tasks of cattle culture. It is no longer his duty to clear dung from the byres nor to smear it on the floor of the kraals[1] and dry it for fuel. Neither taboo nor shame attaches to these tasks, it is true, and if there are no women or boys to perform them a man will do them himself, but it is considered to be work for boys and girls. No more will an initiated boy have to milk the goats and sheep and take them out to pasture with the calves. Instead he will sometimes guard the main herd of cattle in their dry season pastures or more generally sit and gossip around the embers of a smouldering dung fire and wait for the womenfolk to bring him the morning meal.

A boy is everybody's servant. Not only must he milk the cattle and sheep and goats and keep clean byre and kraal but he is frequently ordered about by initiated men, sent to draw water, fetch fuel, light pipes, made to go messages, to lead the bullocks round the camp when his elders wish to leap (*rau*) behind them, and to perform any other task which they require. Certainly boyhood is the period in a man's life when he is more occupied, does more work, than at any other period of his life. One gets the impression when living in a Nuer cattle camp that among the males all the routine work of the camp is done by the boys. After initiation a boy may look forward to a long life of ease. His are now the delights of sitting round a smouldering dung fire with his beloved cattle tethered in front of him. Here he can smoke, sleep, drink milk, gossip, and watch others do the daily monotonous routine work of homestead, dairy, and kraal. There is no one now to disturb his peace by ordering him about. At last he is completely his own master and may work or not as he thinks fit. Every initiated Nuer is his own lord, paying respect to age and the obligations of kinship, but free and independent, owing no man service. A newly initiated boy may now order his juniors about, see that they do their work thoroughly, and admonish and beat them if they are remiss in any task. Even though he is quite small, and perhaps no older than many who are uninitiated, he is a *wut*, a man, while they are *dholi*, boys.

[1] "Byre" refers to the large huts in which cattle are housed in the wet season and which is used also as a men's club. "Kraal" is used to denote the space in front of the byre, sometimes enclosed, where the cattle are tethered and also for the space where they are tethered, surrounded by a wind-screen, in dry-season camps.

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He will respect his elders but they will treat him as a man and with the consideration due to an equal rather than to an inferior.[1]

He has now the supreme joy, to which every Nuer boy looks forward with longing, of entering into the full life of the cattle. He will wander with them over their dry season pastures and will have his own bullock, perhaps more than one, to meet when it returns to camp in the evening, strutting along and waving the long tassel attached to its horns as it tosses its head. He will rub its back with ashes in the evening and perhaps invoke the spirit of his lineage or his dead ancestors as he does so. He may now order a boy to lead his bullock round the camp at morning or evening so that he can leap behind it in the sight of the girls, and may walk among the cattle at night ringing a cattle bell and singing about his cattle, his relatives, and his loves, activities which would be mere presumption in a boy, who would not indeed attempt them.

The elation, the feeling of happy superiority, which accompany this change in a boy's life are evident in his behaviour, and their opposites are strikingly shown in the cases of boys who for some reason have not been initiated at the same time as their contemporaries and playmates. The position of such a boy is pathetic. His friends have been promoted and he is left behind. They are men and he is still a boy. Once his equals they have become his superiors. I knew well one boy in this humiliating position and it was painful to observe how acutely he felt it on occasions. He evidently felt shame at the performance of his boys' duties and tried to associate as much as possible with his initiated companions, with whom he had everything in common, rather than with the smaller boys with whom he was socially identified. I think that his friends tried to spare him humiliation as far as they could by treating him as one of themselves though his work and play were of necessity different from theirs. On one occasion a man of about 16 years of age was beating the boys for neglecting their work and idling around my tent, but when he came to this boy of the same age as himself he raised his hand to strike him and said : " And you ! what are you doing here ? " but he smiled and did not strike him.

After initiation also a boy may give himself over to the absorbing interests of love-making. He may now dance and flirt (*luw*) and indulge

[1] We must not exaggerate this equality. Elder men will still call an initiated person who is young enough to be their child *dhol*, boy, and will order him to fetch them things they require. I have on dozens of occasions witnessed it. But the difference lies between doing a favour to an elder man who speaks to you as his son and being ordered about like a servant by a superior.

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of the age-sets directly senior and junior to his set may also call him by his bullock name. Members of his family and kin will address him by his birth name or by a relationship term. The use of a bullock name has egalitarian implications so that it would not be used between persons whose age-sets are distant from one another. A younger man would not address one much older than himself by his bullock name but as "*gwa*," "father," or by the complimentary title of "son of so-and-so," mentioning the name of his father, or "father of so-and-so," mentioning the name of his eldest child whether son or daughter. Also an old man would not address a much younger one by his bullock name, but as "*gatda*," "my son."

The change of social behaviour which takes place in the life of a Nuer when he passes from the grade of boyhood to the grade of manhood, from *dhol* to *wut*, is shown in the customs I have just described, milking, household tasks of byre and kraal, love-making, dancing, ownership of spear and bullock and bullock-names, etc. But these are customs which differentiate one grade from another grade and not one set from another set. All the age-sets are equivalent in their enjoyment of these privileges and present an undifferentiated opposition to the boys who are deprived of them. There are no further grades into which a set as a whole advances. The Nuer age-sets do not pass out of the grade of warriors into the grade of elders as these grades are not clearly defined among the Nuer. A man, as explained above, ceases to fight when he considers himself too old for this sport and not because his set passes out of a warrior-grade. He marries when he is old enough to do so and when there are sufficient cattle to provide him with a bride, and not because his set passes into a grade of married elders. Instead of the three grades of the Masai system, Boy-grade, Warrior-grade, Elder-grade, there are properly only two Nuer grades, Boy-grade and Man-grade.

But though not graded the sets are stratified and have a traditional pattern of behaviour between one another so that membership of one set evokes a different pattern of behaviour from members of all the other sets. Thus, from the point of view of an individual Nuer, male society falls into three adult groupings: those whom you respect as seniors (associated with your fathers); those with whom you are on terms of intimacy (associated with your brothers); those who owe respect to you (associated with your sons). These patterns of authority, submissiveness and egality, are the only three possible patterns of behaviour between

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individuals in any society, and every society has techniques for determining beforehand which pattern a man employs towards any given member of his community. Nuer culture does this by means of its age-sets as well as through its kinship structure. Any doubt as to how you should act towards a fellow Nuer is eliminated because your attitude towards him is largely determined by your respective memberships of age-sets. Friction and hesitation are avoided because the title of a set evokes from its members a clear pattern of behaviour (*a*) among themselves, (*b*) towards members of senior-sets, (*c*) towards members of junior-sets.

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It may be objected that there are more than three age-sets living at the same time, but from the point of view of an individual, the age-sets tend to fall into three groups corresponding with the three generations of father—self—son. Generations are only distinct for the individual. Thus, to-day, in Lou country the following age-sets still have living members: *Thut*, *Boiloc*, *Maker*, *Dangunga*, *Luac*, *Lithgac*, and any three of these will generally form a generation in relation to the life history of an individual. To a *Lithgac* son of a *Maker* father all members of the *Maker* age-set are his "fathers" and form a group whose daughters he ought not to marry because their "fathers" are his father's also. To this group he owes respect. The age-sets of *Thut* and *Boiloc* fall into the same category as the *Maker* with certain differences due to the greater age of their members. On the other hand a *Lithgac* regards the members of the *Luac* age-set as being on much the same plane as himself in relation to *Dangunga* and *Maker*. The *Luac* and the *Lithgac* will call one another by their bullock-names, and if a *Dangunga* man kills a bullock at a ceremonial feast they will eat together and not with the *Dangunga*. It seems that if a *Maker* man kills a beast at a feast the *Maker* and the *Boiloc* will eat together and the *Dangunga* and *Luac* together; while the *Lithgac* will eat by themselves. Thus, at any one time, owing to the limitations of life, there is a tendency for the age-sets to fall into three divisions in respect to any individual, his seniors, his equals and his juniors. At the beginning of manhood there are only two divisions, equals and seniors, and at the end of manhood there are also only two divisions, equals and juniors, but in middle life there are three divisions.

This social overlapping fits in with biological overlapping, for not all of a man's sons are initiated into the same set. Generally the eldest

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son is initiated into an ageset with one (or sometimes two) intervening age-sets between his age-set and his father's age-set, but two (or sometimes three) age-sets intervene between the age-sets of younger sons and the age-set of their father. Ths overlapping seems complicated to us but is not so to a Nuer. If we consider the position of a member of the *Maker* age-set we shall see that the *Boiloc* are too young to be his "fathers" and he tends to regard them as his equals in contrast to the *Thut*. A man of the *Dangunga* age-et in the same way regards the *Maker* as his equals because they belong to a younger age-set than that of his "fathers"; but he recognises the authoitarian position of the *Boiloc*. Any set tends to regard the set directly senior to it as its equals, though seniors, in contrast to the set higher up who are not only its seniors by a long period of years but also its "fathers." So that while the *Dangunga* regard themselves as of much the same status as the *Maker* in relation to the *Boiloc* the *Maker* regard themselves as of much the same status as the *Boiloc* in relation to the *Dangunga*. Or, while the *Lithgac* consider their position approximately that of the *Luac* when speaking of the *Dangunga*, the *Luac* group themselves with the *Dangunga* when speaking of the *Maker*.

The few examples given beneath show actual cases of division between age-sets of fathers and son. I have stated where the son is the eldest son, but in other cases where I have written younger son I am unable to say for certain his position in the order of sons.

Father.	*Age-set.*	*Son.*	*Age-set.*	*Intervening sets.*
Kerkor	*Maker*	Wan (eldest son)	*Lithgac (Caiyat)*	*two*
Bul	*Maker*	Jok (eldest son)	*Lithgac (Gadit)*	two
Cam	*Dagerpuon*	Wir (eldest son)	*Lithgac (Laiyan)*	one
Carwah	*Thut*	Cam (eldest son)	*Dangunga*	two
Jok	*Thut*	Ret (eldest son)	*Dangunga*	two
Raimon	*Tenghaar*	Nhial (eldest son)	*Pilual*	one
Ngundeng	*Thut*	Deng (younger son)	*Luac*	three
Ngundeng	*Thut*	Riam (eldest son)	*Maker*	one
Diang	*Thut*	Chag (eldest son)	*Dangunga*	two
Diang	*Thut*	Jok (younger son)	*Luac*	three
Ngut	*Lilayuang*	Raimon (eldest son ?)	*Wandwal*	one

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In this list there are only two cases where two generations are recorded, and though two cases are not adequate to show the normal number of age-sets which go to a generation I think that, nevertheless, these two are typical.

Thut	Caroah	} generation
Boiloc		
Maker		
Dangunge	Cam	} generation
Luac		
Lilhgac	Wic	
Lilwyaang	Ngot	} generation
Ruob		
Wangdeal	Rainen	
Rol		} generation
Pilual	Nhial	

It is not easy to describe the patterns of behaviour which operate between age-sets as they are of a very general nature. They are formally expressed in feasts when members of an age-set, or of two consecutive age-sets, eat together and apart from their seniors and juniors, or when members of an age-set purposely abstain from taking part in a feast when one of their members has died. But also in the daily life of village and cattle camp juniors show seniors deference in all situations which occur, in disputes, discussions, economic activities, etiquette, and so on. Father Crazzolara gives an example of this deference when he says "a boy has caught a fish, and an old man, a *ric*-comrade of his father, desires to have this fish and the boy must give it to him, and when his father, for whom it was destended, shows us this, he is glad that his son has such good manners."[1]

Age-mates are on terms of complete equality. They associate together in all activities of life, in work and war and leisure. A man does not stand on ceremony with an age-mate but eats and plays and jokes with him as an equal. When two men of the same *ric* are quarrelling, so long as their quarrel has not resulted in a serious fight, others ought not to interfere. I have often noticed that when small boys of about the same age are fighting with their spiked bracelets the men will laugh and encourage them, saying that they are of the same *ric*, that is to say, of the same age, but the womenfolk run to separate the boys and to take the part

[1] Hat ein Jüngling einen Fisch erlegt und ein Ringgenosse seines Vaters wünscht ihn, so hat er ihm denselben zu geben; und wenn der Vater, für den der Fisch bestimmt war, davon hört, wird er sich über seinen guterzogenen Sohn freuen.

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of the lad belonging to their family. Age-mates are those who naturally associate together in any society in the world. Father Crazzolara writes "A kind of relationship springs up between the *Ric*-comrades, akin to close comradeship. According to the views of the people they belong to one another. When they live together or meet by chance, the meals prepared for the one or the other are eaten in common. In travelling *Ric*-comrades are natural hosts."[1] A man may address a fellow member of his *ric*, his age-set, as *ricda*, *da* being a suffix meaning "my."

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Apart from this general pattern of egalitarian behaviour between members of the same age-set, their like mode of behaviour towards members of other age-sets, their common title, and their exogamous relations, there are a number of customs that ritually express their equality. The chief of these is the strict prohibition on any member of a dead man's age-set of partaking of the flesh of a beast killed at his mortuary ceremony. Anyone who broke this rule would inevitably die of *nuer*, the punishment which falls on those who break serious taboos.

Another custom allows a man of your age-set to ask you if anyone has claimed your daughter's eldest cow, and if you reply that no one has claimed it he will take a bracelet from off his arm and place it on the little girl's leg. When she is married he will then be entitled to claim the *yang rica*, "the beast of the age-set." It is important to note this custom in its relation to the rule that a man must not marry the daughter of an age-mate since the acceptance of any part of bride-wealth is recognition of an exogamous relationship between the people concerned. Further customs that express the social equivalence of age-mates are the rule which says that when two members of the same age-set have adjoining gardens they shall not erect the usual boundary-line or raised earth between them, and the custom which says that if a youth gets a thorn under his finger nail and has to cut it out all members of his age-set who are present ought also to cut off the tip of a toe nail as well. As we have seen at initiation feasts a man is permitted to joke and take liberties with the wife of a man of his own age-set. She is not a possible future mother-in-law, since a man cannot marry a daughter of an age-mate, whereas the

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[1] *Op. cit.* p. 38. "Zwischen den *Ric*genossen entsteht eine Art Verwandtschaft, zumindest eine enge Kameradschaft. Beim Herumziehen, auf Reisen, geben Leute denselben *ric* womöglich zusammen. Wo sie zusammen wohnen oder zufällig zusammen treffen, wird das vorgelegte Essen des einen oder anderen immer gemeinsam genommen. Auf Reisen sind *Ric*genossen die natürlichen Gastgeber."

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wives of men of other age-sets may one day become his mother-in-law. I have never heard it suggested that men have any sexual rights over wives of their age-mates and Nuer were always shocked at my enquiries about this point. I think that they would regard adultery with the wife of an age-mate as worse than ordinary adultery and in the light also of a ritual infringement ; but I have no certain evidence about this.

But it is chiefly at feasts that the age-sets are divided up ceremonially as I have explained above. The *kau* of an animal goes to the *ric matot*, the junior age-set who may eat themselves or may share the meat with the set directly senior to them, according to the seniority of the set to which the owner of the beast belongs. One informant gave me a general example without specifying the seniority of the owner of the animal. He said that at a feast the *kau* would go to the *Lithgac* in Lou country, the *bum* to the *Makeri* and the *juak* to the *Boiloc*. If a *Dangunga* killed the animal we would therefore expect the *Luac* to eat with the *Lithgac*, the *Dangunga* with the *Makeri* and the *Boiloc* by themselves or with any remaining members of the *Thut* set ; while if the animal belonged to a *Makeri* we would expect the *Dangunga* to eat with the *Makeri* and the *Luac* with the *Lithgac*. I may have stated this arrangement too rigidly, and even erroneously, as I rely on one or two casual remarks, and it will be necessary to observe actual feasts before one can say for certain how the age-sets are usually divided at them. One informant (Jok) told me that sometimes at a marriage feast the father of the bride will kill a "*yang rica*," "a beast of the age-set," for all the members of his age-set, who would make a special point of coming to the wedding. He said that in this case members of other age-sets would not be provided with meat though they might beg some from the age-mates of the bride's father.

One of the actions of the age-set system is the regulation of marriage. In my previous essay I pointed out that the clan is an exogamous group and that any near genealogical relationship through the female line is also a bar to marriage. The *ric*, or age-set, is also the basis of an exogamous group since no man may marry the daughter of an age-set. The reason for this prohibition is found in the convention by which all age-mates are regarded as brothers and, therefore, the children of one are regarded as the children of all, just as the children of a man's brother are his children also. Hence a man speaks of all the children of his age-mates as "my children," and is also barred from marriage with one

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who counts by fiction, or analogy, as his daughter. I think we are justified also in regarding the actual ceremony of initiation as creating something in the nature of blood-brotherhood between the members of an age-set, since the Nuer seem to regard them as having a kind of community through the blood they have shed together. The Nuer also regard the lineage and clan as a group of people physiologically related as well as sociologically connected, since they have a notion of the common blood of kin.

Not only is a man prohibited from marriage with the daughter of his age-mates, but he will refrain from having love affairs with them or flirting with them. When I asked what would happen if a man were to marry the daughter of an age-mate, I was told that his comrades would appeal to the *kwoth ricdien*, the spirit of their age-set, stating in an invocation that this man has no respect for their set and asking that he might be removed. He would then die. It is difficult to know how we are to interpret *kwoth ricdien*, but it seems that each *ric* is thought to be associated with its special guardian spirit though I do not think that these have special names.

This prohibition on the marriage of daughters with age-mates on the grounds of brotherhood between them is quite conventional and does not mean that age-mates are regarded as equivalent to brothers in either physiological or sociological sense. Perhaps the function of the prohibition is to be sought in the pattern of egalitarian behaviour existing between age-mates and their wives, a pattern of behaviour quite incompatible with that existing between a man and his father- and mother-in-law. If a man were to marry a daughter of an age-mate his age-mate would become his father-in-law and his wife would become his mother-in-law and he would have to act towards them with such respect as to make it impossible for him to eat or drink in their homestead. But the Nuer system decrees also that a man may act with the greatest freedom, as we have seen earlier, towards his age-mates and their wives. There would hence be a clash between two completely opposed patterns of behaviour, and this is avoided by the fiction of brotherhood considered as the relationship equal to real brotherhood in respect to marriage with daughters though different in most other respects. Doubtless the prohibition is re-enforced by the fact that there would always be a very great difference in age between a man and the daughter of an age-mate, for

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marriage between people of about the same age is usual in the Nuer society and marriage with a girl of the age of one's children is exceptional. 561 582

Conventionality of the prohibition is shown when we come to consider the relations of a man to the daughters of his father's age-mates, because if there were any real identity between age-set relationships and kinship relationship these women would stand in the position to him of sister (father's brother's daughter). In point of fact, Nuer theory holds that children of age-mates may not marry and they form a secondary exogamous group based on the age-set system.

DIAGRAM No. XXIII.

A	AGE MATES ♂
B	CHILDREN OF A ♂ ♀

Thus members of group A may not marry into group B, A and B together forming an exogamous group comprising two generations. A is not an exogamous group since it contains only males and these are permitted to marry one another's sisters, if they are not prohibited from marriage on other accounts. B on the other hand forms in itself an exogamous group consisting of males and their sisters who are not supposed to intermarry.

However, the prohibition on inter-marriage between children of age-mates (between members of group B) is not seriously enforced, at any rate to-day, though I was told that in the past the rule was upheld. Thus, in Diagram No. XXIV, theoretically C ♂ cannot marry D ♀ since A ♂ and B ♂ are age-mates. Because A ♂ and B ♂ are "brothers," B ♂ is the "father" of C ♂ and C ♂ cannot marry D ♀ his "father's daughter." It seems, however, that to-day so long as A ♂ or B ♂ is dead, the marriage is allowed between C ♂ and D ♀ on condition that they make exchange of a special cow or sheep or goat as atonement (*col*) for breaking the taboo. This animal is probably ear-marked for the *kwath ricdiem*, spirit of their age-set, though I was not told that this was the case. An instance of this kind was told in the family of one of my Nuer servants, Tot, whose sister was married to a man whose father was an age-mate of Tot's father. The husband gave Tot, whose father was dead, a female

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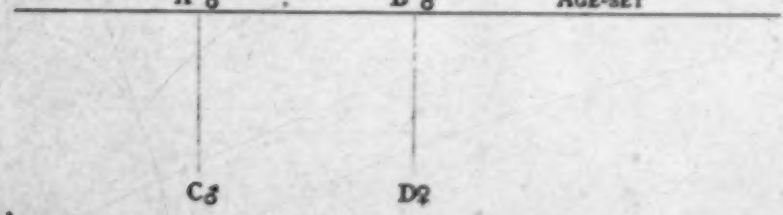
561 582 [832] goat, and Tot gave the husband's father a male sheep. It may be doubted, nevertheless, whether such a marriage would have been regarded as correct by the older generation. I was told, however, that a man would not hesitate to flirt with, or make love to, female children of his father's age-mates without intention of marrying them, and it is evident that the restriction has nothing like the same force as that on the marriage between men and the daughters of their age-mates.

DIAGRAM XXIV.



561 182 To understand the Nuer age-set system we have to observe how it regulates the behaviour of members of a community towards one another. It acts together with the kinship system in determining everybody's attitude towards everybody else, so that the behaviour of each to each other is known beforehand, since it is evoked by their status in relation to one another. We have already seen how by a fiction which recognises adoption as true kinship and by the value attached to descent through the mother as well as through the father, a Nuer community comprises a network of interrelations of a kinship type which are spoken about in genealogical terms. These, however, leave authoritarian status largely ill-defined, and as is usual in societies where rank is unknown leadership is based on social recognition of biological differences of sex and age. In Nuerland authority is in the hands of the males and older males.

561 602 So dominant are notions of kinship among the Nuer that the age-set system is expressed in the ideology of family and kin as we have observed and tends to be spoken of as "fathers," "brother," "sons." Doubtless, this association lends weight to the institution of age-sets and makes them easy for an individual to understand and take part in. Talking to Nuer about their age-sets, one receives a marked impression that the notions associated with them are the familiar notions of family

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life. Certainly the Nuer always speaks of them in terms of family and kin. Not only does he speak of his "fathers" and "sons," but he speaks about members of age-sets senior to his own but not of his father's age-set as though they were his fathers-in-law and their wives his mothers-in-law. These peoples must be respected because their daughters are your lovers and one day may be your wives. Thus a *Lithgac* son of a *Maker* father will regard members of the *Dangunga* age-set and their wives as potential mothers- and fathers-in-law.

The analysis presented in this paper may appear difficult, perhaps unconvincing, when stated in abstract terms, but observe how daily contacts and occupations in a Nuer cattle-camp operate smoothly and how their smooth working is partly a result of social stratification by age. We have seen how the question of who shall perform tasks connected with the monotonous task of cattle-raising is settled by the clear cleavage between the duties of men and the duties of boys. In the many situations that arise in the daily life of cattle-camps, one has opportunity to see how the young give way to the old and listen without interrupting to their advice and admonition in disputes and discussions of all kinds. They will order the younger men to perform services for them and will lecture them upon shortcomings; and the extraordinary pride of a Nuer, the object of ceaseless astonishment to Europeans, no matter how long they have resided in the country, is not injured by orders and admonition from a man of a senior age-set. One observes that the frequent quarrels in a Nuer cattle-camp are between members of the same age-set, and for a man to struggle with the members of a junior age-set would be ignoble for both alike. Everybody's behaviour to everybody else is thus defined on rough, general lines in the daily range of their contacts. In your relations with A he must pay deference to you since he belongs to an age-set junior to your own. On the other hand when you meet B you must defer to his opinion and you may do as he asks you to do without losing your dignity. Boys are everybody's servants. You have left your spear in your windscreen when you have been visiting friends and you want someone to bring it to you. You look round and see C, a boy, and you tell him to go and fetch it. Then there is D, who is of the same age-set as yourself. He is your comrade and your equal. He can say anything he likes to you and you can reply to him as you like. Your equality is shown as much in your quarrels as in your fellowship. It is

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561 expressed in your close association, in love-making and dancing, in hunting and warfare, in mutual visiting and sharing of meals. The essence of such a system is that it should work automatically for there is no one to enforce it. You ought to behave with deference or equality or superiority to men of different age-sets, and if you do not behave towards a man as his age-status requires you to do, then you will have done the wrong thing—people will say so openly and your father and uncles will consider themselves insulted by your conduct towards a member of their age-set and you will suffer from their chagrin. That the system works is perhaps in part due to its association with kinship ideology and also to the fact that it does not have to work outside the local community where the bonds of kinship are effective. It stratifies members of the local grouping, of the village and district and cattle-camp.

Every society regulates the interaction of its members, among other ways by organising them into age-grades that are associated with the ideology of family life. The problem is: why does age become stratified into formal sets? I do not know that any satisfactory answer can be given to that question and none will be attempted here. It is pertinent to ask, however, whether there are any other means of determining community interrelations in questions of leadership and authority. From this point of view, it would be desirable to make a comparative study of what happens in neighbouring cultures like those of the Shilluk and Dinka, especially among the Shilluk where the system has almost entirely broken down, for we may suppose that it has at one time been less negligible a social influence than at present, and also in those East African societies, like the Masai, where the age-set institution has reached its highest development. But, although such questions can only be treated on the basis of comparative study we may, nevertheless, note once more the absence of any very decided political status among the Nuer. Nor does a kinship system provide an adequate means of denoting leadership. Even in the narrowest type of kinship relations, that between brothers, authority is not an integral part of patterns of kinship behaviour. And we have to remember that wielding of authority is always a difficult matter in any society, and where it is not based on open restraint this is due to a clear cleavage between those who order and those who obey, each person knowing at once to which party the other belongs. Among the Nuer it can hardly be said that leadership and authority are highly

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developed, but in so far as they are present, they derive their sanction to a large extent from the age-set system. We must also remember that age-sets are organised tribally and are one of the institutions common to all members of the same tribe and may, therefore, be supposed to act as a unifying agency in the loose political life which we have seen to characterise Nuer tribes. As much as language, moreover, it is participation in a Nuer age-set that stamps a man as a Nuer and distinguishes him from Dinka, Shilluk, Anuak, and other peoples. When you have six weals running across your forehead you are a real Nuer, a member of the finest nation on earth. The Nuer does not doubt his superiority over the other folk and is intensely proud of the marks on his forehead which prove his nationality.

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Those clans which are associated with tribes have generally greater lineage extension and depth than those which are not so associated, and the larger the tribe the more significance this association has for the Nuer. It is in the largest tribes, territorially and numerically, and those which have expanded most and assimilated most foreigners, like the Lou and Eastern Gaajak and Gaajok tribes, that we find the greatest attention paid to the distinct and dominant position of the aristocratic clans. Indeed, not only do political relations affect the clan structural form, splitting it into segments along the lines of political fission, but also the clan system may be said to have a corresponding action on the political structure. In a confusion of lineages of different clan origin and in an amorphous network of cognatic links, the political structure is given consistent form, in the language of kinship, by one clan—a single system of lineages—being made to correspond to the tribe and to its structure of opposed segments. Just as a man is a member of a tribal segment opposed to other segments of the same order and yet also a member of the tribe which embraces all these segments, so also he is a member of a lineage opposed to other lineages of the same order and yet also a member of the clan which embraces all these lineages, and there is a strict correspondence between these two sets of affiliations, since the lineage is embodied in the segment and the clan in the tribe. Moreover, the distance in clan structure between two lineages of a dominant clan tends to correspond to the distance in tribal structure between the two sections with which they are associated. Thus the system of lineages of the dominant clan enables the Nuer to think of their tribe in the highly consistent form of clan structure. In each segment the network of kinship ties are given unity and coherence by their common relationship to the lineage of the dominant clan that resides there, and as these separate lineages are composite in relation to other clans so the whole tribe is built around an exclusive agnatic framework. Though the sections may tend to draw apart and to split, a common agnatic value, shared by the dominant lineages contained in them, endures.

IV. Age-set System

Another tribal institution is the age-set system, which is socially more significant among the Nuer than among other Nilotic peoples of the Sudan. Nuer boys pass into the grade of manhood through

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a severe ordeal and a series of rites connected with it. These initiations take place whenever there are a sufficient number of boys of from about fourteen to sixteen years of age in a village or district. All the youths who have been initiated in a successive number of years belong to one age-set, and there is a four-year interval between the last batch of initiates of one set and the first batch of the next set, and during this interval no boys may be initiated. The initiation period is open for about six years, so that, with the four years of the closed period, there are about ten years between the commencement of any age-set and the commencement of the set that precedes or succeeds it. The age-sets are not organized in a cycle.

Nuer age-sets are a tribal institution in the sense that, in the larger tribes at any rate, all the sections of a tribe have the same open and closed periods and call the sets by the same names. They are also the most characteristic of all Nuer national institutions, for initiation scars are the sign of their communion and the badge of their supremacy. Moreover, though each big tribe has its own age-set organization, adjacent tribes co-ordinate their sets in periods and nomenclature, so that the Western Nuer, the Eastern Nuer, and the Central Nuer tend to fall into three divisions in this respect. But even when a man travels from one end of Nuerland to the other, he can always, and easily, perceive the set which is equivalent to his own in each area. The age-set system, therefore, like the clan system, whilst having a tribal connotation, is not bound by lines of political cleavage.

There is usually in each tribe a man whose privilege it is to open and close initiation periods and to give each set its name. This man belongs to one of those lineages which have a special ritual relationship to cattle and are known as 'Men of the Cattle'. He opens and closes initiation periods in his own district, and other districts of his tribe follow suit. Once a period has been opened, each village and district initiates its boys when it pleases. The age-sets have no corporate activities and cannot be said to have specific political functions. There are no grades of 'warriors' and 'elders' concerned with the administration of the country, and the sets are not regiments, for a man fights with the members of his local community, irrespective of age. In the rites of initiation there is no educative or moral training. There is no leadership in the sets.

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There are probably never more than six sets in existence at any time, since six sets cover about seventy-five years. As each set dies its name is remembered only for a generation or two. Each set becomes more senior as the years go on, so that a man rises from a junior to a middle, and from a middle to a senior position in his community as a member of a group. The stratification of the age-set system is thus a further exemplification of the principle of segmentation which we have seen to be a characteristic of the political and kinship systems. There is further stratification within each set, but this is not of great importance, for the set sees itself, and is seen by others, as an undivided group in relation to other sets, and its divisions become merged as the set becomes more senior. A set once complete does not change its membership, but the sets are constantly changing their positions in relation to the whole system. There is also a certain relativity about these stratified sets similar to that we noted about tribal sections and clans, for, while they keep their distinction, there is often a situational fusion of two sets in relation to a third. This is especially apparent at feasts. Whether a set is regarded as junior or equal depends not only on its position in the age-set structure, but also on the status of a third set concerned in any situation, a tendency due to the connexion between age-sets and generations.

The most evident action of age-sets in determining behaviour is the way duties and privileges are effected by a transition from boyhood to manhood. Also, in virtue of the position of his set in the structure, every male Nuer is in a status of seniority, equality, or juniority towards every other Nuer man. Some men are his 'sons', some his 'brothers', and some his 'fathers'. Without entering here into further detail, we may say that the attitude of a man towards other men of his community is largely determined by their respective positions in the age-set system. Hence age relations, like kinship relations, are structural determinants of behaviour. The age-set system may, moreover, be regarded as a political institution, since it is, to a large extent, segmented tribally and since it divides a tribe—as far as its male members are concerned—into groups, based on age, which stand in a definite relation to each other. We do not consider, however, that it has any direct accord with the tribal structure, based on territorial segmentation, which we have recorded. The politico-territorial

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system and the age-set system are both consistent in themselves and to some extent overlap, but they are not interdependent.

V. Feuds and other Disputes

The political system operates largely, we think, through the institution of the feud which is regulated by a mechanism known as the 'leopard-skin chief', a title we retain, although the appellation of 'chief' is misleading. This person is one of those specialists who are concerned, in a ritual capacity, with various departments of Nuer social life and of nature. Leopard-skin chiefs belong to certain lineages only, though not all members of these lineages utilize their hereditary ritual powers. In most of Nuerland, the lineages are not branches of dominant clans.

When a man has killed another, he must at once go to a chief, who cuts his arm so that the blood may flow. Until this mark of Cain has been made, the slayer may neither eat nor drink. If he fears vengeance, as is normally the case, he remains at the chief's home, for it is sanctuary. Within the next few months the chief elicits from the slayer's kin that they are prepared to pay compensation to avoid a feud and he persuades the dead man's kin that they ought to accept compensation. During this period neither party may eat or drink from the same vessels as the other and they may not, therefore, eat in the home of the same third person. The chief then collects the cattle—till recently some forty to fifty beasts—and takes them to the dead man's home, where he performs various sacrifices of cleansing and atonement. Such is the procedure of settling a feud, and before the present administration it had often to be used, for the Nuer are a turbulent people who esteem courage the highest virtue and skill in fighting the most necessary accomplishment.

In so brief a description, one may give the impression that the chief judges the case and compels acceptance of his decision. Nothing could be further from the facts. The chief is not asked to deliver a judgement: it would not occur to Nuer that one was required. He appears to force the kin of the dead man to accept compensation by his insistence, even to the point of threatening to curse them, but it is an established convention that he shall do so, in order that the bereaved relatives may retain their prestige. What seems really to have counted were the acknowledgement of community ties between the parties concerned, and hence of the

This rite changes the status of the boy from that of boy to man. Now he may attend all dances, he may carry a spear—in fact, all the privileges of a man are his. He also may exercise authority over boys who have not as yet had the tribal marks cut, and his sisters must treat him more respectfully than in the past, for now he has a voice in the affairs that concern them. However, he must render due deference to those who have had their tribal marks cut before him.

NUER CLASS NAMES

All the boys who have had their tribal marks cut during a certain period (usually consisting of from three to eight or ten years) are given a certain class name. While no Nuer knows his age exactly, he will always tell you to which class he belongs. Those who know the sequence of classes may judge his age approximately.

Classes of Nuer with approximate age now (1929).

Lierrni	Tribal marks cut in 1927 (but only one authority for this name. All others call this class of 1927 Cai Yatni or Wum Kelunka).
Cai Yatni	Marks cut in 1925.
Lithgaac intot	Age now 20–25 years.
Lithgaac indit	25–27 years.
Cuiloc	27–35 years.
Dongonka	40– years.
Meker	50– years.
Bailoc	55–60 years.
Thur	60–70 years, but few living.
Nompiny	Probably none living now.
Cuiteuor	
Lajok	
Yilhith	

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caŋdar	noon.
bookn caŋ	middle of afternoon.
ke thiaŋ	late afternoon.
ci war lip	early evening.
war	night.
wardar	midnight.

('ci' is prononced 'chi', 'caŋ,' is pronounced 'chang', 'thiaŋ', is prononced 'thiang'.)

NAMES OF NUER—DETERMINING DATES

[527] A Nuer has a splendid memory, but dates, birthdays, and anniversaries are not the things he stores away in it.

A parent may tell you in what season of the year a child was born, but after a few years the number of its years becomes but a confused memory.

When some special event has transpired which fixes a date firmly in their minds, they may date an event from that time. The time when the English patrol was in the Garjak country is often used when dates are discussed; an event may be dated either so long before or after the 'boats of the air' came. A flood, a famine, a year when wild animals were numerous, all may be used to mark time.

When the age of a child is asked it may be determined from the reply to such questions as:

does he crawl?	one year.
is he weaned?	(if so) three years old.
does he herd sheep?	8–12 years old.

For later ages one may ask 'when will he have the tribal marks cut?' (tribal marks are usually cut when the boy is from 14–16 years old). After the tribal marks are cut, age may be determined by the class name, providing the sequence of classes is known (see Chapter IV.)

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A woman may be asked 'If you were a man, what class would you be in?' and her age determined by the answer. [305] 551

A child is often named to commemorate some event that has just occurred so the name in itself gives an idea of the date: for instance 'Rath' is famine. Possibly the boy was born in a famine year. If the family are in mourning when the child is born, it may be called 'Mun' if a boy or 'Nyamwon', if a girl. The name means 'ground' or 'daughter of the ground'. 561

An orphan—whose mother is dead, although the father may still be living—is often called 'Ret' which means 'orphan'. 'Bany Piny' is also a name given to an orphan which means 'left on the ground'. A girl orphan is often called 'Nyant'. 551

Twins are often given names which mean 'the leader' and 'the one who was left', indicating their order of birth. The feminine prefix is used if a girl.

Buth	the leader (a boy).
Nyadwoth	the one who was left (a girl).

A child always takes the personal name of its father as its surname, although in so doing the possessive form of the father's name is often used, but not always.

Mun Dep	name of father.
Rath	personal name of son.
Rath Mvon	full name of son.
Pur Kal	name of father.
Nyalira	personal name of daughter.
Nyalira Pur	full name of daughter.

A girl's name almost always has the prefix 'nya-' or 'nyan-' meaning 'daughter of'.

A girl retains her father's personal name as her surname throughout life as she does not assume her husband's name when she marries.

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

AGE-SET ORGANISATION

INITIATION

Formerly boys were initiated at the age of 16 to 18, each village making its arrangements independently. The ceremony usually takes place after the rains. The officer in charge of initiation into age sets is the wut ghok (the man of the cattle). He opens the period when initiation may take place, 'when the knife is brought out' (*ngoac kac car*) and closes it 'when the knife is hung up' (*ba ngoac ngah*). At the beginning of an initiation period the cattle expert kills a bullock, a big dance is held and he makes a speech opening a new period of initiation. In each tribe there is a cattle expert whose authority is acknowledged in matters concerning age-set organisation.

At the initiation ceremony 6 deep cuts are made across the forehead of the boy, extending from ear to ear. After the cutting (*gar*) the boys, who suffer great pain, are shut up in a hut for two days. There is a period of confinement (lasting one to two weeks) which is followed by one of mild licence. During the whole of this time the initiates must strictly avoid any contact with cattle. Finally, cleansing ceremonies are carried out and a concluding ceremony and dance. After this the youths are recognised as adults and enter into normal adult life and affairs, and into lifelong contact with the herds.

AGE SETS

All boys initiated during a number of successive years belong to a single age set (*ric*). Until recently there was a four years' interval between the end of one set and the beginning of the next, and this was the period when the man of the cattle hung up his knife and no more initiations were held.

The age sets are organised independently in each tribe, but it often happens that, when a new set has been started in one tribe, an adjacent tribe will follow suit.[1] A set usually lasts for ten years before being cut and there are generally members of six sets alive at any one time. The names of the sets are not uniform for the whole of Nuerland, and they are not repeated. Each age set has two or three subdivisions, each with a separate name. Subdivisions are made up of those initiated together in one year or possibly the combined initiates of two years. All the members of a set are known by the name of the first division. At initiation the individual enters the set in which he will remain for the rest of his life. The members of a set have a common name, equal status, and observe certain patterns of behaviour towards one another and towards members of senior and junior sets (see below p.148).

The sets are not specifically graded as boys, warriors, and elders, as in some forms of age-set organisation, nor have they any political, juridical or military functions. Their importance is of a social nature in that a person's position in the age-set structure determines his social behaviour. Milking and other women's work is forbidden to a youth after

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *The Nuer*, 1940, p.250.

561 881 initiation. He is a cut, a man, whereas before he was one of the *dholi* (boys). He is now treated by his elders as a man and he has close contacts with the cattle; he herds them, has his own ox and takes an ox name. He goes to dances and indulges in love-making and flirting as the preliminaries to marriage.

561 764 582 Certain ritual observances are practised between members of the same age set, and between members of different sets: sets are segregated at sacrificial feasts; members of a set cannot bury an age mate or participate in the mortuary ceremonies; a man may not marry or have sexual relations with the daughter of an age mate, for he is as a father to her; a man should not marry a daughter of one of his father's age mates unless his or her father is dead, because the strained relations between the two fathers-in-law would be incompatible with the free and easy relations of equality which should exist between age mates.

561 Members of a junior set are expected to show respect to members of senior sets. Since every Nuer has an age relationship to every other Nuer, the attitudes and types of behaviour between two men are determined in advance of meeting, unless there is any particularly strong and overruling tie of kinship.

561 608 Relations between sets are defined in ordinary kinship terms. Members of a father's age set are fathers, their wives are mothers; members of one's own age set are brothers, their wives are sisters, and so forth. When speaking of a set immediately senior to his own, but not his father's, a man will call the men fathers-in-law and the women mothers-in-law, because he is usually courting the daughters of this age set in preparation for marriage.

MARRIAGE

582 Marriage is not permitted between clansfolk, close cognates, close kinsfolk by adoption, close affines or persons who stand to one another as father and daughter in the age-set system. If it is uncertain whether the genealogical distance between a couple is wide enough to permit marriage, a sacrifice (generally a beast) will be offered to cut the bonds of kinship if any exist.(1)

There are several types of marriage among the Nuer.

588 1. *Ghost Marriage.* If a man dies before he has married or if his wife does not bear him male children, one of his close kinsmen has the obligation of marrying a wife to his name, for it is held that an initiated male should be allowed to lie in his grave unremembered in his children. A vicarious marriage is contracted, and the vicarious husband acts as though he were the true husband in the marriage ritual. Evans-Pritchard states that "in physiological and in domestic roles he is husband, in all but the legal sense..... The legal husband is the ghost in whose name the bride cattle are paid and the marriage ritual performed."(2) The ghost family is a legal family and such families are almost as numerous as simple

(1) Evans-Pritchard, "Nuer rules of exogamy and incest", 1949, p.90.
(2) Evans-Pritchard, "Some aspects of marriage and the family among the Nuer", 1939, pp.389-9.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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lineages. The *colwic* spirits are also Spirit in a tutelary relationship to the families and lineages to which they belonged in the flesh before they were metamorphosed into spirit. Also, the spirits of the air may have a tutelary relationship to families and lines of descent, and where their attachment is more to an individual prophet he has public functions through which the spirit becomes patron of local and political communities. Totemic spirits may also, though in a rather different manner, have a secondary significance for political groups through the association of dominant lineages with tribal sections. Likewise, though to a lesser extent, nature sprites are Spirit in a tutelary relationship to families; and even fetishes, though of a rather different complexion, are Spirit in a tutelary relationship to individuals, and sometimes to local communities to which these individuals belong. The attachment of all these spiritual figures to social groups is indicated in various ways, most noticeably in ceremonial and in payment of cattle to them at marriages.

That these spiritual conceptions lack autonomy and are rightly regarded as social refractions of God is further shown by the fact that *kwoth*, without any distinguishing name, can become associated with any social group or office. Thus, as we have seen, Nuer speak of the *kwoth* of a leopard-skin priest, 'the spirit of the flesh', and they speak also of '*kwoth wuonde*', 'the spirit of his (the priest's) earth' (pp. 291–2). This is no particular *kwoth* but is Spirit seen in relation to priestly powers and functions. Likewise they speak of *kwoth cuekni*, the spirit of twins, to which sacrifices are made at the birth of twins and to which a cow of the bride-wealth of the sisters of twins is dedicated. Here again, this is not thought of by Nuer as some particular spirit which has an existence and name of its own but as God in a special relationship to twins, or rather to the event of a twin-birth. Another example is the way in which they speak of the *kwoth* of an age-set, the tutelary, nameless, spirit which protects the members of the set and avenges wrongs done to men by their age-mates. This cannot be a distinctive spirit in its own right as it were, if only because the sets pass in turn into oblivion and are replaced by others. It is rather God thought of in relation to a particular set, just as he is also the separate, while still being the same, guardian spirit of the other sets. He is both the one and the many—one in his nature and many in his diverse social representations.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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fortune hanging over them and that the death may be only part of it. It is necessary to clear off the whole debt before any further evil comes to them. Otherwise people may cut their feet when fishing, pierce their feet when hunting, cut themselves with spears when dancing, or indeed meet with almost any misfortune, even death. Nuer also feel that if the dead is not appeased by this ceremony he may return in anger to fetch the living, especially his wives and children, and the cattle.

I have only once witnessed this ceremony, rather early in my study of the Nuer, and I have supplemented my account of what I then saw with statements made to me later. The ceremony was held at Dini in the Lou tribal area for the ghost of an important old man called Lam. When I arrived at the dead man's village towards evening the people had just sacrificed an ox outside his kraal. This sacrifice had been for Tutthiang, Lam's father, for it was known that Lam had intended before he died to sacrifice this animal in his father's honour. Next morning, before sunrise, an ox and a cow and its bull-calf were speared at their tethering-pegs in Lam's kraal. People watched to see how they fell; because if a sacrificed animal falls over cleanly on its side, especially if it falls on its right side, it is a good omen and shows that the ghost is content, whereas if it falls on its head or totters about before falling it is a bad omen. It is regarded as important that a cow still giving milk should be sacrificed for the ghost of an old man who had a position in his community lest he should feel that sufficient sacrifice had not been made. To kill a cow in milk is the greatest sacrifice a Nuer can make. An animal must be sacrificed for each wife of the dead by one of her sons or by some kinsman on behalf of her hut. If the ceremony is for a young unmarried man his favourite ox should be sacrificed. A cow should be sacrificed for a senior woman if the herd is large, and a male calf for a young woman. However, there are no hard and fast rules about the matter. The people of the home should sacrifice what they can afford, cattle if possible, but a goat or sheep if they cannot obtain at least a male calf, which is unlikely, because a man can generally borrow one from a neighbour.

At Dini after the cattle had been killed they were skinned and the meat apportioned to the various categories of kin. It is an absolute rule, however, that no member of the ghost's age-set may partake of the meat of animals sacrificed at his mortuary

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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765 782 [561] ceremony, and I was told that it is dangerous for them even to smell the cooking meat. Everyone then moved off to sit in front of a hut to listen to the commemorative orations, which are also invocations; and here were spread out on the ground the ghost's possessions, his fighting-spears and fishing-spears, his beads, his metal arm-rings, his ostrich-shell girdles, his pipe, and, since his son was senior government interpreter in the district, his clothes and whistle, articles not possessed by ordinary Nuer. At the side of these were placed the heads and hides of the cattle which had just been sacrificed. The people sat with their backs to the now rising sun and facing the direction of the setting sun because 'death follows the setting sun'. Nuer say that 'the west is the side of [123] death, the east the side of life', and the verb *kwony* in their [196] language means both 'to bury' and 'to set' (the sun). When they sacrifice an ox for a sick man they hope it will fall towards the east. The master of ceremonies (pp. 287–9) of the ghost's family made the first commemorative oration, after throwing some tobacco towards east and west. As he spoke he walked up and down in front of the people brandishing the spear with which the animals had been sacrificed. He commenced his address (*lam*) by shouting out his ox-name. He must also have shouted out his clan spear-name, though I have not recorded it in my notebooks.

I did not take down his address at the time but I was told later that a master of ceremonies speaks in this wise: 'God, now thou hast given us badness, or is it simply the lot of creation? [Is the death thou hast sent us a special evil designed for us or has the dead man merely suffered what soon or late comes to all created things?] Now thou hast taken so-and-so [he names the dead man], now he has become one of thy people, turn about and take him right away. We who are left in the world, give us peace. Let his children who remain in the world be at peace. He is not finished, his children will carry on his name. In the future they will bear his name. Let no further evil befall us.' The master of ceremonies is now speaking to the ghost: 'So-and-so, my brother [or 'my father' if he was a much older man], now thou art one of God's people. Do not forget us, let it be thy habit to speak [on our behalf] to thy father [God]. When we go into the bush let us tread on wild rice [avoid all dangers and troubles]. Let us beget children. May all evil be taken away from us now, and may we remain in peace.' The master of ceremonies again addresses God: 'God, and

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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III

When a ghost comes to trouble the living it is said to *cien* them. It is useful to discuss this concept in the light of another, that of *biit*, to curse,[1] because the two are closely connected, the ability of a ghost to harm being the *post mortem* operation of the projective power of the psyche, the power to harm another through the mind and the heart.

The curse of certain persons in Nuer society is believed to be effective if they have been wronged. If they utter curses without due cause (*cuong*) the curses will either be ineffective or harm the speakers of them. A man curses another by uttering an invocation (*law*)—which in this context is an imprecation—over, or about, him; and Nuer distinguish different kinds of curse by reference to the relationship of the persons implicated in it—*biit gwan*, the curse of a father, *biit nara*, the curse of a maternal uncle, *biit kuaara*, the curse of a leopard-skin priest, and so forth. Some of these curses are regarded as weightier than others.

The curse of father or mother is serious. A man may curse his son for constant disobedience and for meanness, especially for refusing him meat. Indeed, any old man may curse a youth for refusing him food, because both in a general sense and in terms of the age-set system all youths are sons to the aged, but his curse would not be as weighty as that of the true father. 'A father's curse is to hunting, to fishing, and to hoeing, but he will not curse him (his son) to cattle.' The youth may then miss his mark in hunting, fishing, and war, and his crops may fail. He may also injure himself in these occupations, or suffer one of the many possible misfortunes that beset a traveller, both in the literal sense of mishaps to one on a journey and in the figurative sense of evils that face a man on his journey through life, which the Nuer, who have a liking for meiosis, speak of collectively as 'thorns'. At its worst the curse of a father or mother may be a *biit liagh*, a curse which results in death. However, 'a father will not curse his son to cattle', because the cattle belong to the lineage and if he caused them to die he would only be harming himself and his kinsmen and ancestors.

[1] A *biit* is a curse in the sense of consigning a person to misfortune and not in the sense of cursing at a person, which is *kuith* or, where there is a joking relationship, *leng*.

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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herd the cattle and hoe the gardens, but spent his time attending dances and courting girls. He wandered about the country having a good time, and when he returned home it was only for a meal. He would be off again next morning. One day his father, in exasperation, cursed him, saying that he would never have a wife and children and would live to a great age to lament that he had no sons of his own in whom he would be remembered but only children he had begotten by the wives of other men. So it happened. Luak never married, though he begat two sons by a widow-concubine. When he died he left ten head of cattle with instructions that Dol, the second of his natural sons, was to marry with them a wife to his name, so that he might have sons called after him. That year all the ten animals died of rinderpest; so that people said that the curse on Luak went on acting after his death. The father's curse was here not in the first instance 'to cattle' but 'to sons', although in the sequel its purpose could only be achieved by the death of the cattle. Dol told me that, as he has now enough cattle, he would like to marry a wife to his genitor's name but fears to take steps to do so lest the cattle die. He had decided that it would be prudent to marry first a wife for himself and then, if ever he has again enough cattle, to make a second marriage in the name of his natural father.

Other specified curses among the Nuer are those of the *ric*, the age-set, and of certain religious personalities, the *kuaar muon*, the priest of the earth (the leopard-skin priest), the *wut ghok*, the man of the cattle, and the *guk*, the prophet (Chapter XII). If a man wrongs a member of his age-set, as by committing adultery with his wife or by not assisting him when attacked by strangers or when wounded, the wronged man may utter an imprecation, saying 'as if we did not look at this sun together' (when lying on their backs awaiting the cutting of the marks of manhood on their foreheads), and Nuer told me that it may well have lethal consequences. A leopard-skin priest can curse a man who obstructs him in the exercise of his functions as peacemaker in fighting and feud. On account of his mystical connexion with the earth his curse is believed to be particularly harmful to the crops, though it may cause other misfortunes as well. In his imprecation he may forbid the man he curses to plant in his earth and tell him to beget his children in the tree-tops and herd his cattle in the sky. The *wut ghok* has ritual functions in connexion with cattle and his

782 [137] incest a fruit of the sausage tree (*Kigelia aethiopica*) may be cut in half, though I am uncertain whether this constitutes a sacrifice *in sensu stricto*.

We have discussed to whom sacrifice is made and what is sacrificed. We have now to ask by whom it is made, and when and where. We have first to distinguish between the person (or social group) on whose behalf it is made, whom we may speak of as the sacrificer, though with some danger of misunderstanding, because he may not take an active part in the rite performed on his behalf, and those who act on his behalf, the actors in the drama.[1] There may be a number of these. Several people may take part in the consecration and several men may deliver invocations. One man may present the victim, another consecrate and make the invocation over it, and yet another slay it. Nevertheless, there are always one or more prime actors, those who make the consecrations and invocations, which, rather than the actual killing, constitute for Nuer the main acts in the series of rites making up a sacrifice; and we may therefore speak of anyone who, after consecrating the victim, makes an invocation over it as the officiant. There may be several of them. In certain sacrifices, particularly those of the collective kind, whoever else may invoke God, one or other particular functionary either must do so or it is thought highly desirable that he should do so. I discuss in Chapter XII the sacrificial roles of these various functionaries in Nuer society. Normally any senior man, usually the head of the family of the sacrificer, can officiate at personal sacrifices. He would generally be one of the sacrificer's paternal kinsmen but it would not matter if he were not. The sacrifice is to God and not to ghosts, and it therefore does not matter who officiates. A youth would not officiate if there were [561] an older man present, but this is a matter of social convention only: there is no ritual bar to his acting. Women do not sacrifice. [562] They may assist in the act of consecration with ashes and they may pray, but they do not make invocations or slay victims. Neither the sacrificer nor the officiant has to be in a state of ceremonial purity. This is an idea entirely unknown to Nuer.

It is obvious that in the collective sacrifices the rites must have to some extent a determined place in the whole social activities of

[1] Hubert and Mauss, op. cit., pp. 18 seq., make the distinction by using 'sacrifiant' and 'sacrifiateur'. A word corresponding to 'sacrifiant' is not so easily formed in English.

231 883 776 animals, dedicates them to spirits, and in other ways makes formal use of them for religious purposes, nevertheless, the ox a father gives his son at initiation provides him with a direct means of communication with the spiritual world. It is more than a possession, more even than part of his social personality—it is a point of meeting between soul and spirit and has therefore a sacramental character also.

231 553 From the colours, their distribution, the shape of the horns, and other peculiarities of the ox of his initiation a youth takes, or is given by his companions, his *cot thak*, his ox-name. It may be the same word as that by which the ox's markings are indicated, but generally it combines the name for the markings with a prefix descriptive of something connected with the ox. For example, a man whose favourite ox is black and white (*rial*) may call himself *Luthrial* or *Luerial*, *luth* being a large cattle-bell and *luer* a long tassel attached to one of the horns. At first only his age-mates may [561] know his new name, but the older people soon get to know it too, for they hear his mates greet him by it and they also hear him about it out as he displays himself with the ox in the cattle camps which are formed soon after initiation. Also, young men of about the same age call out their ox-names, with many embellishments, to one another at dances, often after a bout of duelling with clubs, and when in a dance two lines of youths stand opposite each other and shower ox-names on one another preparatory to a spectacular jump into the air in unison.

The calling of a youth by a name the same as, or derived from, that by which his favourite ox is referred to is perhaps the most striking example of, and evidence for, what Professor Seligman speaks of as 'identification'. Indeed, in listening to Nuer poems [539] one is often in doubt whether it is the ox or the man that is being spoken about. The representations are never entirely distinct. Somewhat different, though related and also very striking, is the [552] custom called *thak moc*, the calling out of the (name of the) ox. A man shouts out the name of his favourite ox—the ox's name, not his ox-name, which may be an elaboration of the ox's name—when he hurls his spear at an enemy or at his quarry when hunting or fishing, for example, '*mo rial*', 'black-and-white (ox)', or '*thakde mo rial*', 'my black-and-white ox'. In some of my earlier writings I have translated *moc* by 'invocation' and 'to invoke', following Driberg's translation of the Lango

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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case of the leopard-skin priestly lineages, any member of a lineage of men of the cattle can perform the services attached to that office, but in practice only some, and senior, persons would normally be called upon to do so. These services have less religious and social importance than those of the *kuaar muon*, and a man of the cattle is not by virtue of his office a person of social importance. One hears of him chiefly in connexion with his ability to perform rites to cure sick beasts and to make barren cows fertile, usually by spitting on grass and beating the animal's back with it while asking God to make the beasts well or fertile. In times of murrain he may sacrifice an ox to God. I was told that after consecrating it he would speak in this vein: 'What, God? Take this ox, it is thine. Thou art master of the world, the world is thine and it is thine affair alone. What, God? Do not kill all the cattle. What will our children eat? No one will live. Oh God, take thy cow and spare a portion of the herds. God, I am a man of the cattle and I have come to sacrifice this beast; take it, it is thine.' Nuer say that he addresses '*kwothde*', 'his spirit', that is Spirit as figured in relation to his office, the God of his fathers. He may also on raids lash a tethering-cord in the direction of enemy herds to ensure booty. He may be consulted about the time of moving to dry-season camps. He is said to sprinkle people with milk in time of sickness, and at his own mortuary ceremony his kinsmen and possessions are aspersed with milk. He is buried in fresh cattle manure. He cannot accept cattle in compensation for adultery with his wife. His curse can cause cattle to die and a man to have diarrhoea if he drinks milk. All these customs and notions give him that mystical association with cattle which is indicated by his title and also by his badge of office, a circle or two of tethering-cord round his neck.

As I have explained earlier (pp. 253-6), initiation of boys to manhood is intimately bound up with their relation to the cattle. It is therefore appropriate that it should be a man of the cattle who in each tribe determines when a new age-set should commence and when it should close, performs sacrifices to open and close the periods of initiation, and names the sets; and this is the most important public function of any man of the cattle. We see here again how, as in the cases of the masters of ceremonies and the leopard-skin priests, the chief religious function of men of the cattle, their formal sacrificial and ceremonial role, is concerned with group activities. In their case the activities are relations

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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793 between successive age-groups within the age-set system and not
●561 between kin-groups or local and political communities.

It is remarkable that, considering what cattle mean to Nuer, the
793 man of the cattle is not socially or ritually so important a figure as
578 the priest of the earth. Doubtless this is because his functions in the organization of the age-sets are not so often brought into play, nor so striking and important, spiritually and socially, as the priest's functions in homicides and the feuds that arise from them. There is an opposition in thought between the two. It cannot often happen that a man of the cattle quarrels with a priest of the earth; yet Nuer volunteer the information that if they quarrel and curse one another the man of the cattle asks the leopard-skin priest on what he expects to live if all his cattle die, and the priest counters by asking the man of the cattle whether he intends to take his cattle up to the skies as he can no longer pasture them on earth. Nuer say that since both are placed in an impossible situation they exchange gifts to dissolve the curses. Mr. P. Coriat in a Government Report of 27 February 1931 remarks that some of the Karlual tribe were feeling the need for a man of the cattle (for some reason they did not, I suppose, have one at the time), and he adds that the reason for this is a belief that if a man quarrels with a leopard-skin priest his cattle will not be acceptable as sacrifices as the earth cannot absorb their bones and blood. Therefore the services of a man of the cattle are necessary, so that the sacrifices will go direct to heaven. Mr. Coriat's observation suggests that Nuer tend to think of the man of the cattle in relation to the above and of the leopard-skin priest in relation to the below. This may be so, but I have no clear evidence that the former is classed as a *ran nhial*, a person of the above.[1]

793 As I have said earlier, the word *kuar* may be used in a general sense to describe persons with ritual powers in contrast to *dueghni*, laymen. I do no more than mention the titles and functions of some others than those we have been discussing, because they are not prominent figures in Nuer society and play only occasional and minor roles in their religious life. The *kuar yaka* or *kuar yiini*, priest of the mat or mats, acts as arbitrator between the

[1] To P. W. Schmidt (*op. cit.*, pp. 1–4, *et passim*) the problem is solved in terms of culture-complexes. With agriculture go mother-right, evidences of which he finds among the Nuer, and an earth-religion. With cattle husbandry go father-right and a Sky-God religion. Nuer culture is a mixture of the two.